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# THE DIVINE ASPECT OF HISTORY

IN TWO VOLUMES  
VOLUME I

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# THE DIVINE ASPECT OF HISTORY

by

JOHN RICKARDS MOZLEY

Take better part, with manlier heart,  
Thine adult spirit can ;  
No God, no Truth, receive it ne'er—  
Believe it ne'er—O Man !  
But turn not then to seek again  
What first the ill began ;  
No God, it saith ; ah, wait in faith  
God's selfcompleting plan ;  
Receive it not, but leave it not,  
And wait it out, O Man !

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

VOLUME I

Cambridge :  
at the University Press  
1916





TO THE DISCOVERER OF THE LAW OF UNIVERSAL GRAVITATION  
ILLUSTRIOUS AMONG THE IMMORTALS

ISAAC NEWTON

THIS TREATISE

WHICH GIVES REASONS FOR THE BELIEF  
THAT A SPIRITUAL FORCE ISSUES FROM GOD  
WHEREBY LIFE IS MADE DOMINANT OVER MATERIAL FORCES  
AND SOULS IN THE FLESH ARE LINKED WITH SOULS DEPARTED

IS DEDICATED





## PREFACE

THE purpose of this book includes a certain amount of negation, but is nevertheless essentially positive and affirmative. The negation will be found in arguments directed to show the unhistorical character of the Biblical miracles; the miracles of healing, in the New Testament, being admitted to be exceptions in some degree, and to contain some truth. Certain parts of the doctrinal system of the New Testament are too dependent on the miracles to stand when the miracles are discarded; but there are other parts of New Testament doctrine which remain uninjured, even though we disbelieve most of the miracles.

The positive affirmation of this book lies in its vindication of the main current of Biblical teaching as unique in its spiritual truth, especially the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth; whom Christians are right in regarding as the revealer of the way into eternal life, and as the reconciler of God and man, and who was also (though this is not the way in which Christians commonly put it) the first of the sons of men to feel intimately his true filial relation to God, which relation he also taught us to believe as belonging to ourselves, and as capable of being realised by us if we trust God and pray to him with all our hearts. That Jesus is rightly called the Christ, or in other words the ruler of all mankind (which is what the title Christ implies) is also affirmed in this book; though it must be understood that the rule attributed to him lies in his attractive power, not in any external compulsion exercised or authorised by him. External compulsion, though not always avoidable among men, is quite different from the government and the organisation which spring from true religion.

The Christian society which has sprung from the teaching of Jesus Christ is regarded in this book as a society which has been in many ways truly faithful to its Master, and truly like him, but which yet has been liable, as all men are liable, to error; and the error has sometimes been great and complex; but in the Christian

society the possibility of reform and renovation has always existed. At the present day the greatest difficulty of the Christian society lies in the doubt whether the critical intellect of man has any right at all to judge of those religious emotions which have been handed down as sacred among Christians from generation to generation. It is maintained in this book that, though the critical intellect may doubtless go wrong, yet it cannot be altogether debarred from that province.

It is a question which cannot be quite disregarded, in view of the present divisions in the Christian society, which part of that society has preserved the original type, instituted by Jesus himself, most truly, and with most profit to the world at large. But I have thought that the unity, rather than the differences, of the Christian society ought to be accentuated at the present day, and I have given no distinct answer to the above question; though some account of the separation between the eastern and western churches, and of that between the Roman church and the Reformed churches, had of course to be given, and has been given.

The great religions of the world outside Christianity, Brahminism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, the worship of ancestors as practised in China and Japan (not quite without recognition of a Divine Being), the ancient religions of Greece and Rome (which have now perished, but still affect us by the extraordinary merit, and even the spiritual insight, of Greek and Roman writers), and finally the religion of Islam, are regarded as possessing true merit, and as capable of affording instruction to ourselves; though they have not penetrated into the centre of religious truth in at all the degree in which Christianity has done so. Judaism is regarded in this book as so near to Christianity, as hardly to be outside it—at any rate it ought to be so regarded in the estimation of Christians.

I trust I have never forgotten that historical conclusions cannot have mathematical certainty. The attempt to assimilate history to science, by treating the history of our contemporaries as that which it is most important for us to learn, after which (it is suggested) we may mount up to the more recondite regions of mediævalism and antiquity, appears to me an impossible attempt. Contemporary history cannot be understood without reference to the past; hence, in spite of all difficulties, we have to begin with the past, and then we can give a consecutive story, in the proper lines of evolution.



But it is not of course to be disguised that the history of the remote past does present us with many difficulties. I do not think I have generally been paradoxical; but it may be proper to mention where I have most diverged from the conclusions arrived at by previous writers. I have ventured to put the date of Zoroaster in the first half of the sixth century before Christ, believing that the Magi had had a creditable career of considerable length before he appeared among them, and that their less worthy characteristics in after times were in no wise chargeable to Zoroaster, but were the result of their unsuccessful revolt against the Persians in the time of Darius—a calamity which they had not the strength to endure without loss of rectitude.

Another point in which I do not stand alone, but in which still the common opinion is against me, is my belief that Zerubabel lived, not under Cyrus and Darius Hystaspes, but under Darius Nothus, a century later than is usually supposed. The effect of this alteration of historical view is very much to raise the character of the Jews of the fifth century before Christ, who on this showing had to surmount difficulties far more serious than is usually conceived in obtaining their restoration to their own country, and who did surmount those difficulties with extraordinary patience, fidelity, and resolution. But I must refer to my fourteenth chapter, and to the first appendix to that chapter, for the reasons for this opinion.

It is not quite the same sort of difference from ordinary opinion, but I may note it here, that I hold the Christian Church of the fourth century after Christ to have had a greater share of responsibility for the fall of the western empire than is generally believed; at the same time I think it was want of experience more than moral error which misled the Church authorities of that time; so that it does not tell vitally against them.

In my first chapter I have expressed the opinion that organisation, which so powerfully assists human action, has also had a share in the evolution of sun and stars. This is an opinion which does not admit of speedy verification; but if organisation were found, not merely to increase human power on the earth, but also to increase the natural powers of the earth itself, to make it permanently more fruitful, more filled with living agencies (and living agencies that work harmoniously together), we should have ground for expecting a still greater development of terrestrial energy as time goes on; and it is impossible to set limits to such an advance. If mankind could peacefully unite for a



few centuries, we should know better than we do now what is the power of organisation in raising the whole condition of our earthly habitation; and it is fervently to be hoped that this experience may be won by mankind. The present treatise endeavours to show that such a hope is justified by our knowledge of the power which resides in religion.

This is, I think, all that I need say in regard to special points mentioned in the present work; but there are some more observations that I must make.

The anthropologists, I know, have added much to our knowledge of the curious habits and superstitious fears which have accompanied the evolution of religion; but the true evolution of religion is that which takes place by the divine enlargement of the spirit of man; and my present belief is that the anthropologists have not added much to our knowledge of this. If I am shown to be wrong, I will gladly confess my error.

Metaphysical philosophy is capable of being a great support to religion, and I can by no means think of it as an unfruitful subject, though a very difficult one it certainly is. The philosophy which Socrates began, and Plato continued, was the first attempt to show the importance of the mental element in experience; and they were right in connecting it with religion; but detailed clearness of view was not to be expected at that stage of the world's history. Indeed for long afterwards, though ethics advanced, metaphysical philosophy remained as a kind of vision, in which the divine nature was the culminating point, and man was somehow transcendently connected with this divinity. Kant was the first to show that these beliefs as to God and man are not proved by such arguments as had been offered on their behalf from various quarters; at the same time he did not deny the value of the beliefs; and in practice he held that God, human freedom, and immortal life were guiding conceptions for mankind. To practical life then, the proof of these doctrines was committed; and if the view of history given in the present treatise be correct, practical life confirms them. The embracing of great conceptions because they are necessary, and proved to be necessary, for our practical guidance—that is, I think, the central character of true philosophy; and Kant was the person who first distinctly led men to this kind of view. However, philosophy radiates from this centre into all manner of inquiries and subjects of thought; and there is just a little more that I should like to say of it in this place.

First, those philosophers who are called idealists, who have insisted that matter is an unmeaning word unless mind is assumed as well—that matter acquires its definite character through the percipient mind, and would be vague unless it were regarded as somehow perceived—these philosophers are not easily refuted; though in our ordinary life we seem to disregard them, and to treat matter and mind as separate things. Berkeley in England, perhaps Malebranche in France, and Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel in Germany, are the most famous of these philosophers; but the most cardinal proposition of all idealism appears to me best expressed by a Scotch philosopher of the middle of the nineteenth century, James Frederick Ferrier. He said that our personal self is known to us as the universal element in all our knowledge; that it cannot be thought of as a particular thing among other things. It is true that in the spiritual world our self is regarded as a self among other selves; but in the world of our sensuous perception this is not so; in that external world our self is a universal element, present in every perception of ours. I am not quoting Ferrier's words, but I am sure I am giving his meaning rightly, as expressed in his *Institutes of Metaphysic*; and it appears to me that he expresses both a true plain fact, and also a true mystery in which that plain fact is involved. We cannot escape the region of mystery even in our most commonplace thoughts, nor can we desire to escape it, for in mystery lies the seed of progress. It is evident how entirely this kind of view fits in with the religious temperament, and sanctions it on the intellectual side.

The same result is enforced on us by another consideration, which biological science makes absolutely clear. Our senses, or in other words the faculties by which we apprehend the external world, are growths, just as much as a tree is a growth; they began, ages ago, with a very small power of discernment; they have increased in power until sight and hearing have become able to discriminate in a truly marvellous degree. But is it reasonable to suppose that we have come to an end of this growing process? Will not new methods of perception rise up in the generations to come? May we not hope, and even expect, that the souls of the departed, who are still joined to us by love, will be known by us in due time with a knowledge that we shall recognise as genuine and unquestionable? I think we may expect this.

Of the authorities referred to in this book, there are three,



not mentioned as often as might be expected by English or Scottish theologians, but looked upon by myself with much admiration, and therefore proper to be mentioned here. One is the *Acta Conciliorum*, published in Paris early in the eighteenth century by Harduin and his fellow Jesuits. This work is invaluable for anyone who wishes to understand the mediæval Church. Another is the *Church History* of Neander; a work clumsy, it is true, in its structure, but so serene, impartial, and large in its knowledge, that every thoughtful religious inquirer must be the better for reading it, especially the later volumes of it. The third authority, or perhaps I should rather say set of authorities, is that great series *Sacred Books of the East*, edited by the late Professor Max Müller, and written by learned and able men of many nations; the most enlightening set of works on the Asiatic religions which has ever been published in England.

A few more books, for different reasons, I must mention here. Our greatest English historian, Gibbon, is so necessary to every one who undertakes to say or write anything about the latter days of imperial Rome, that to name him is sufficient. At the time when I wrote the twenty-third chapter of the present work, I had not read Mr F. Warre-Cornish's book on *Chivalry*; else I should have borrowed some of the descriptive touches given in that interesting account of the most picturesque side of mediæval life. Lastly, I must not leave unrecognised, in relation to the question of miracles, what is I suppose the best defence of the New Testament miracles written in England in the nineteenth century, the Bampton Lectures for 1865, by my uncle, Dr James Bowling Mozley, who shortly afterwards became Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. It is a work full of acute and valuable remarks, but it does not include any critical examination of the gospel evidence, which is not, I think, at all as strong, when properly weighed, as it is assumed to be in those Lectures; also the characteristic results of Christian doctrine are assumed to be altogether good, whereas the action of the Christian Church in the middle ages was often of a very questionable kind indeed, and the *primâ facie* (and I think the correct) view is that this was not unconnected with Christian doctrine. If the greater power wielded by the human race, from its European centre, in modern times as compared with antiquity, be drawn from the strength of the Christian religion, as I think is the case (and I have argued in this sense in the present work)—if the greater respect paid to women, and greater mildness in general behaviour, be due to the



same cause—must not the fantastic asceticism, the repression of the intellect, the persecution of Jews and heretics, which for so many centuries were ordinary forms of Christian action, be reckoned as indicating some fault in Christian doctrine? To recover from errors, is a power inherent in the Christian Church; but to deny the errors of the past, is impossible; and the natural inferences to be drawn from those errors must not be shirked.

One more literary production, and a very recent one, I must now mention. In the *Observer* newspaper for January 30, February 6, and February 13 of the present year are three articles by that eminent physicist, Sir Oliver Lodge, so similar in their purport to the view advanced in the first chapter of this treatise (and expanded at the close of the twenty-seventh chapter) that I cannot avoid speaking of them here. The gist of them is that life is the restorative element in the universe. Here is the paragraph in which this thesis is summarised (a paragraph prefixed to each of the three articles mentioned above):

“It has been assumed from a physical point of view that the universe must come to an end, unless it receives a new impulse of creation, such as it must have had at its beginning. Every mathematical thinker during the last century has held that cosmic energy must decay by dissipation of heat—that the whole clock of things, as it were, must come to the stillness of an everlasting death. This is the greatest and most mysterious of all the themes of pessimism. Sir Oliver Lodge seeks escape from the physical aspect of the problem, and suggests that it may be found in the nature of life.”

In the articles themselves, the following is the central proposition which elucidates the whole: after saying that “Life is definitely not a form of energy,” Sir Oliver Lodge adds, “Life certainly guides or directs energy; that is its physical function; and I see no reason against some form of life being able to direct energy uphill, so to speak, instead of being only able to utilise energy while in process of falling down.” A luminous sentence; but I venture to add that this guiding function of life is impossible, unless we take into account Herbert Spencer’s theory of an Infinite and Eternal Energy *beyond* our senses, which streams into the world surveyed by our senses. For the actual point of the guidance of material energy by the living agency lies in a region unknown to us. Hence I have placed this theory of Herbert Spencer at the foundation of the whole view, and without

it I do not believe that the view can stand. Further, considering the mysterious nature of life, the possibility follows that life of a very exalted kind exists in the sun and stars now. This addition to the theory Sir Oliver Lodge does not (I think) hold; but it explains a very great deal, if it be true.

But now I must refer to another point—a small one. I trust that the reader will not think the absence of capital letters, in pronouns indicating God or Jesus Christ, a sign of want of reverence; which reverence I truly feel. But I think that in naming the most exalted beings, it is a wrong habit of mind to feel oneself obliged to express that exaltation by a particular sign; and it has a tendency to lead other people into hypocrisy; for there are sceptics in the world who do not want to flaunt their scepticism, and yet are harmfully affected if through custom they express themselves so as to imply belief. The practice of using capital letters, in these cases, is a modern one.

I must not forget to express my thanks to those private friends, who during a long course of years have helped me, in one way or another, in the work which is now completed. There are too many of these for me to mention them all by name. But I cannot leave unnamed Henry Sidgwick, now departed, who represented to me the duty, for candour's sake, of giving a careful account of my opinions, for the benefit of persons interested in religion; or Henry Graham Dakyns, also departed, whose continual sympathy and encouragement were of the greatest value to me; or Warren Maude Moorsom, whose interest in the book has been unflinching, and who told me when it ceased to be amorphous and became an organism. To my three surviving children I am also greatly indebted; to my elder son, Edward, for a great deal of excellent criticism; to my younger son, Kenneth, for information concerning the early Christian writers and also concerning modern continental opinion; and to my daughter, Eleanor, for some valuable suggestions. I trust my readers clearly understand that the kind help thus acknowledged is no indication that the helpers are in agreement with the views expressed in these volumes. In these difficult and delicate subjects a helping hand is often given where agreement cannot be reached; and it would be a great pity if the acknowledgment of such help were debarred by reason of intellectual differences.

This also is the best place for me to say that I am sorry if I give pain to anybody by disturbing ancient landmarks; but, conversely, I may ask my readers not to judge of my book by reading a few



casual pages, without giving the trouble necessary to grasp the purport of the whole.

Finally, let me not omit to mention the many benefits for which I am indebted to the University of Cambridge, from the time when I first entered her walls as an undergraduate in the year 1858, down to the present day, when she has done me the honour of publishing my book.

J. R. M.

May, 1916.



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## CHAPTER I

### THE UNIVERSE IN RELATION TO MAN

HUMAN history is a brief fragment. Time eternal, as it must succeed the present day, so must have preceded it ; space infinite lies around us. Can space and time ever be without material contents ? However this may be, it is hundreds of millions of years, if we may trust the astronomers and physicists, that the stars of heaven have been gathering splendour and pouring out their light into the regions of space ; and even if we take the history of our earth alone, geologists will certainly not be content with a million years to account for the strata which must have been deposited in the waters of the ocean, and which are now raised up into mountain ranges. What, compared to these vast realities, is human history ? It is but six or eight thousand years of the past that are illuminated for us by written records, for the most part very imperfectly ; and it is one of the smallest and most insignificant of the orbs of space that has been the scene of all human action, from first to last.

It is true that there is, even on the first showing of the matter, something to be said in honour of historical study, when compared with the science of the external universe. In human history we find beings whom we may love ; even in the sorrows and tragedies of human life a deep interest is often involved ; hope is caught and cherished in our hearts from the hopes of the human beings who have preceded us ; reverence is felt for brave souls, who have acted and suffered heroically. These are sentiments which the astronomer, the physicist, or the geologist may feel as a man ; but they are not written for him, according to his present knowledge at all events, in the science which he studies ; if he wishes to feel his heart warmed, his sympathies strengthened, he will find the fuel of such fire in the pages of history, but scarcely will he find it in the sciences of external observation or in the calculations of the intellect.

Yet, when we have said all that we can in favour of historical study, a question remains behind, which may damp our ardour



again. Is not the race of man, no less than the individual man, transitory? Is there not this permanent cloud hanging over us, that we must all disappear into nothingness, first each one of us individually, and then after many ages the entire race of men? How many races of living beings, strong in their own day and generation, have disappeared from the surface of the earth—the ichthyosaurus, the mammoth, the moa of New Zealand—which last, even two centuries ago, is said to have been a still living creature! Many, many other less notable species of animals have flourished on this earth for ages, but have now departed, and can never be revived again. May not mankind vanish, even as the others have vanished? and we may remember that the eminent physicist Helmholtz predicted the extinction of the solar light and heat, without which earthly life can hardly exist. Can mankind exist for ever?

A certain answer to such a question as this might be supplied from the Christian religion, with its promise of a new heaven and new earth, were we to take that promise literally; but in any such literal acceptance we should be deserting wholly that natural human understanding on which we rely for all our ordinary actions; and it will not be history in that case which will be our guide, but a scheme of things independent of history. It will be the task of the present work, in subsequent chapters, to show that the Christian religion is really the solvent of the historical problem, elevating history so as to make it the more inspired companion of physical science; but not the Christian religion in its literal acceptance; the Christian religion interpreted by the light of the experience we have gathered since the time when that religion first began, nearly nineteen centuries ago.

Our present problem is to find a scheme of thought which shall give an explanation, not quite inadequate, of the state of things in which we live; so far, at least, as to satisfy our conscience, and not to clash violently with our understandings. The physical universe, whatever else it may be, is a cradle in which human history lies; and it is possible that, as physical science influences and colours human history, so likewise the elements of human history may be able to impart a colour and a warmth, a sympathetic emotion, to parts of the physical universe where at present we do not suspect the presence of life at all. If this be so, human history will indeed be a talisman of power. Let us consider the nature of it more closely.

That which first strikes the inquirer, when he pays regard

to those purposes, struggles and thoughts, which fill the history of man, is the exceeding subtlety of the field, when compared with that which physical science tries to compass. Physical science, it is true, has its subtle methods, among which the theorems of mathematics are preeminent; but no mathematical theorem presents that mixture of plain direct reasoning with elusive side-currents, dimly conjectured and uncertain, which is the ordinary staple of history. Among the greatest themes of history are the characters of men; and if the characters of men are often a puzzle to us in the intercourse of common everyday life, how much more must they be so when our whole knowledge of them is derived from the writings of fallible, often prejudiced and ignorant, witnesses! Therefore, in spite of the vastly greater compass of physical science both in time and space, history presents for our decision more doubtful, more difficult problems, than any part of physical science does.

But the next thing we observe, when we study the history of man (and more notably at the present day than ever before) is that the history of man introduces to our notice a principle of government, in a sense in which physical science does not. In physical science we have intermingling causes, forces which combine in different proportions and produce diversified results; but physical science, in the strict sense of the word, excludes the consideration of purposes, aims and ends; whereas government is essentially concerned with purposes, aims and ends.

Looking however into the matter more closely, we observe that no sharp severance can be made between the topics of physical science on the one side, and the topics into which government enters as a necessary constituent on the other side. The physical side of life can never be ignored; and hence living things cannot be excluded from physical science; yet all living things are organised; and organisation implies government. The apportioning of forces towards an end is government, and the apportioning of forces towards an end is seen in the lily and the oak-tree, in a way in which it is not seen in the mountain torrent or in the movements of the clouds or in the revolution of the planets round the sun. The lily and the oak-tree draw nutriment out of the air, the water, and the earth in such quantities and proportions as will best nourish the lily or the oak-tree to its perfection; we know by what channels this is done, but we cannot measure the forces employed in the operation, or say why the plant chooses certain elements for its nurture and rejects others. We



are in presence of something of the same mystery which we find in human history ; life, wherever it be found, has something in it which we cannot reason about with certainty.

Life is mysterious, because of the incalculable nature of that organised energy which it sets into action. The peculiarity of organisation is this, that while we do not appear to create force by it, we do multiply very greatly the effectiveness of force ; we increase our own effective power ; and we bring to light forces of which otherwise we should have been ignorant. Looking back through the records of history, we see that human power has increased wonderfully as the ages have gone by, and that the increase has taken place through larger and more thorough organisation. It was a wonderful thing for the Pharaohs of Egypt to build the pyramids ; but how much more wonderful are the feats of modern engineers ! The piercing of mountains by tunnels, the construction of railways and railway engines, steamships and harbours, are deeds which far surpass anything which was done four, five, or six thousand years ago. The Pharaohs did not more surpass the builders of the lake dwellings of the primitive ages, than they have been surpassed by the material constructors of the present day ; and all because our means of organisation are greater and more flexible. Take another example. In no period of ancient times was government as effective as in the period of the early Roman emperors, down to Marcus Aurelius inclusive. Could those emperors have established a post office in each city of their dominions, to convey letters with the accuracy with which they are now conveyed in Italy and France and Spain ? They certainly could not, nor did any one in those days dream of doing such a thing ; letters were sent by special messengers, known to the sender, and as these were necessarily few, letterwriting could not be a general practice. Men were neither so peaceable, nor so enterprising, nor so faithful, seventeen hundred years ago as they are now ; and therefore organisation is far more powerful at the present day than it was in ancient times ; and the result is, that the race of man has increased in power incalculably.

It will be seen then that human history, inferior as it is to physical science both in range and in accuracy, does introduce to our notice a form of power which physical science hardly notices at all. It is true that physical science cannot help mentioning living organisms ; but writers on physical science never, as far as I know, take note of the great power which the principle of organisation supplies.



But having said this, I must mention an objection which may not improbably be made to this exaltation of organising power. It may be said, that as organisation does not create force, but only uses force more effectively than the crude natural man can use it, the effectiveness of organisation is necessarily limited by the amount of force, or energy, which is supplied to it. Moreover, it will be added, since the earth and the whole solar system are continually losing energy by the dissipation of heat and other forms of energy into the surrounding space, there will come a time when organisation in this part of the universe will cease, because there is no more force or energy for it to work up into new forms of effectiveness. This is an argument which, not precisely in these words, but in this sense, is actually used at the present day.

It is an argument which, for its validity, depends entirely on the assumption that the amount of force, or energy, which awaits our care, our intelligence, and our industry, in the years which are to come, is finite and not infinite. If an infinite store of energy is laid up in the unknown storehouses of the universe ; if access to those storehouses is obtainable by us ; then the living inhabitants of the earth, of whom man is the head, will never want material on which to operate, will never want the means of operating ; the bankruptcy with which we are threatened will not take place. If, however, proof be required that that infinite store exists, such proof from the nature of the case cannot be had ; a store whose existence can be proved would by that very fact be finite and not infinite. Proof, then, must not be demanded ; but a belief may be felt to be reasonable, and rightly accepted, in spite of the absence of strict proof ; and the question is, whether the belief that man has an infinite support behind him to carry his action on through all future ages, is reasonable or not.

It will not be out of place to refer here to the opinion of a famous philosopher, who will not be accused of prejudice. Herbert Spencer, is not, I believe, an authority on the details of science ; and he is certainly not an authority on history. But no man has ever looked more steadily and impartially than he on the whole scope of science, so as to discern the philosophical elements inherent in it. He was the first of all men to discern the immense range of the principle of evolution ; and as the counterpart of that immense range in the results, he saw that the source of evolution must be one. Let me quote the remarkable words in which he enunciated this last truth ; it is the closing sentence of the sixth part of his *Principles of Sociology* ;

Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he [i.e. the man capable of discernment] is ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed.

The form of the concluding phrase must be noted ; Spencer does not say, "from which all things have proceeded" ; it is the present and ever continuing effluence of the visible from the invisible of which he speaks. The utterance is not properly a religious one ; but it marks with precision the limit at which science passes over into religion ; and religious considerations are, I believe, needed for its full acceptance. But even without bringing religious considerations to bear, so important is the principle of the unity of origin of all existent things, that the sentence I have just quoted deserves great respect on scientific grounds alone ; and it will be well to consider in the first place how far it is supported by the obvious primary aspect of things, before adding those elements of thought and feeling through which Spencer's principle becomes truly religious.

We notice, that at the birth of every human infant something new enters the world of our knowledge, which had not been there before ; and it is difficult not to extend this assertion to other new born things which are not human. There is a new centre of energy ; the baby derives large portions of its being from its father and mother, but its individuality it does not derive from its father or its mother. It is a new person in the world ; and so mysterious is the source of personality, that we cannot refuse to contemplate the possibility that new energy may enter the world through this avenue. If this be so, the invisible reinforces the visible.

There is a further series of facts, which in some degree can hardly be denied to be true, but which for their full verification must probably await further experience ; these, if finally verified, would greatly support the view that new energy enters the world along with new life. It can hardly be denied that the fertility of the earth depends in no inconsiderable degree on the energy and skill of man. Recent discoveries have made known the fact, that large portions of central Asia, which are now barren and waterless, were formerly well watered and populous. Did the desolation which has overtaken these tracts come from natural causes alone, and was it incapable of being averted by human effort ? is it now incapable of being remedied ? I believe that the most probable answer to these questions, judging both by



what we know of the wild savagery that prevailed in central Asia in bygone days (of which Jingis Khan is the most famous but far from the only example), and also by what has been done by civilised men during recent years to reclaim deserts in various parts of the world, is that prudent human action is capable of increasing the sum of life on the earth, as certainly perverse human action is capable of diminishing it. If further experience shows that this is true on a large scale, the contention that there is an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all the energy of this visible world has proceeded and does proceed, will be felt at any rate to be quite consistent with our natural knowledge ; and life will be seen to be the avenue through which it enters the world.

But now it must be considered in what way religion, as we know it in our experience, affects the question. Herbert Spencer spoke of the Infinite and Eternal Energy as essentially the Unknown ; and unknown it is through any of our sensuous faculties. But the emotional part of man is not sensuous ; the sympathy which binds human beings together is not sensuous. Will these parts of our nature tell us anything about the Infinite and Eternal Energy ? Let us bear in mind how closely the sympathetic parts of human nature are allied to that power of organisation, which as a power is not reckoned very highly by physical science, but which history reveals to us as truly important in relation to man, and which gives us a prospect of attainments in the future far beyond any which have been reached at the present day. If men sympathise with each other, they can work together, and organisation can proceed safely. Sympathy then is closely related to the most characteristic power which man possesses, to the highest ideal at which he can aim.

It is no superficial or transient need of human nature which bids us desire an orderly life, a life in which our duties are commensurate with our faculties, in which affection is predominant, in which our present labours are lightened by future hopes. These are the elements, spiritual and not material, in which human power centres. But in order to show how these may be fostered, how sympathy may be fostered and organisation extended, I must make that transit into true religion which Herbert Spencer stood on the brink of but did not actually make.

If the Infinite and Eternal Energy be a Spirit, full of all that sympathetic emotion which is exhibited by the best persons in their highest moments (though that Spirit is too mysterious to



be called definitely a person), then the universe is worthily animated by its central Power. No one who believes this will think prayer unnatural ; for every one must feel that his own character is made up of various habits of action and strains of feeling, of which some are less worthy than others, and some need repression, others need to be strengthened. That Infinite Spirit of whom I have spoken is in religion named God ; and it will be the object of the present treatise, while not denying some intrinsic merit to human nature, to show that the animating and controlling power of God is a necessity for mankind, and that prayer is the natural intercourse between man and God. I do not speak from mere theory ; had I not been saved by it myself, I would not have recommended it to others.

We are saved by prayer to God ; but yet the relation in which we stand to man, as well as the relation in which we stand to God, must be a part of salvation in its full sense. To be saved in the full sense, must mean that we are capable of surviving that seeming collapse, which we all of us suffer in death ; and if we are capable of surviving it, then the organisation which begins in this life must be continued into a future life, and for all eternity ; and this means that we have eternal relations with our fellow men.

Government of the spirit of man, and therewith government of this earth, which is the abode of man ; government by divine inspiration and help, leading to a salutary organisation, and thereby to increased life and happiness ; such is the solution which I offer for the problem which life presents to us. But I add this, that it is a solution which will be found unavailable unless we extend our views towards a life which shall belong to us after this life in the flesh has passed away ; for that alone will give us a perfect organisation, and perfect relations with our fellow men. And I may be permitted to add, though it is a thesis the proof of which is beyond the present chapter, that in Christianity, when the right distinctions are made, when we see rightly what elements are temporary and what permanent in that entire system which we name Christianity, lies the power to create those eternal relations of men with the Divine Being and with each other which will constitute a full solution of the problem of life. Not, however, until I come to deal with the life and death of Jesus Christ, can I clothe this whole subject with those sacred and inviolable emotions which are to us the witness of there being, in our own persons, an eternal element.

At present I must recede from the topics to which I have

just been referring. It is not the permanence of the individual, but the permanence of terrestrial life and specially of humanity, with which the present chapter is concerned ; and there is a difficulty in the way of our believing the permanence of terrestrial life, which may seem formidable. Against ordinary dangers it is not hard to conceive that we may protect ourselves by a right use of the resources that we possess ; but there is one danger against which it may seem that we are quite powerless. The future extinction of the sun's light and heat was predicted by Helmholtz, on grounds accepted by the leading physicists and astronomers of the world, as an event likely to take place not indeed very soon, but still within twenty million years from the present time ; and though twenty million years is long as compared with the individual life of any of us, it is nothing compared with eternity. Twenty million years will come to an end as surely as fifty years will come to an end ; if, after twenty million years, all life on the earth is destroyed, our view of the universe is not essentially altered from what it would be, if we supposed the destruction about to take place within fifty years from to-day. It is true that we may fall back on the view of literal minded Christians, and suppose that a new heaven and new earth will be provided for us twenty million years from to-day ; but such an interpretation of the well-known passages in the Old and New Testaments is not a very satisfactory one ; and the want of reasonableness about any such view cannot but be felt as very damaging to it.

It is, however, well known that the recent discovery of radium has tended very considerably to modify the theory of Helmholtz in the eyes of all scientific thinkers. But before saying how and to what extent the theory of Helmholtz has been modified of late, it will be well for me to give some brief account of what the theory is in itself.

The theory of Helmholtz is an expansion of that earlier theory, the nebular hypothesis ; which, first conceived by Kant, and strengthened by Herschel and Laplace, was always received with considerable favour, though perhaps not with absolute acceptance, by scientific men. Here is the tale of it, as far as concerns the solar system.

In the beginning there was a vast nebula. How this nebula came, we are not at present to inquire ; but however it came, it gathered towards its centre and began to revolve, by virtue of the Newtonian law of attraction. More and more, as the ages rolled on, it grew in coherence ; yet certain films, at successive



intervals, detached themselves from the main body of the nebula ; and these films probably surrounded the main nebula like rings, and revolved about it, as the rings of Saturn do about that planet now. In any case, whatever the exact shape of these films, they gradually grew together severally into their densest portions, until each film became a globe of hot, gaseous or molten, matter, the primitive form of a planet. Of these planets one, as we know, has in its cooling down become the abode of living beings ; the other planets have also cooled down, but whether they are the abodes of living beings is not certainly known. It is a natural, but not absolutely necessary, part of the theory, to suppose that the satellites of the planets were formed by a similar process to that by which the planets themselves were formed.

All these planets however in their entirety were but a very small fraction indeed of the nebula ; and after the planetary films had been detached, the mass of the nebula still kept retreating inwards, in globular form, revolving continually about a central axis, until at last it assumed that size under which we know it, being no other than our brilliant luminary, the Sun.

So far, so good ; but in the above description it has not been explained how the sun has come to be so brilliant or so hot as it is ; or why the planets (seemingly) were once brilliant and hot. Laplace has assumed that the whole nebula was from the first of fiery substance ; but about the middle of the nineteenth century Helmholtz showed, by a very notable train of reasoning, that this assumption was not necessary. It was the compression, Helmholtz said, involved in the contraction of so vast a mass, which had engendered the solar heat and light ; for it must be remembered that the nebula is held to have been at first immeasurably larger than it is now. The sun, Helmholtz added, is still contracting ; the contraction produces continually a vibratory movement in all the particles of the sun throughout his whole mass ; in this vibratory movement heat and light consist ; and the vibration is communicated to the ether which surrounds the sun, and is conveyed through the ether to distant parts of the universe. Nor is it only heat and light that are thus conveyed ; electricity, magnetism, and even chemical forces are wafted on the waves of the ether, ready to do any work that may come in their way ; and thus for instance a magnetic storm in the sun may create an aurora in the earth, the chemical rays from the sun affect beneficially the foliage of plants, and the light waves



from the sun touch our eyes, and are the source to us of all that knowledge and all that delight which comes to us from our faculty of seeing.

There is much in the process thus indicated which goes beyond our present powers of reasoning ; but as a broad conception it is intelligible ; and it is not difficult to explain even to an unlearned reader the most salient points of the causative process suggested. The most natural question for any reader to ask, on first considering the theory, is whether mere compression of the matter which constitutes the sun could possibly produce all that amazing amount of heat and light which the sun pours forth. It is not easy to give among familiar terrestrial phenomena an instance of gradual compression producing heat ; but of sudden compression producing heat and light there is a familiar instance, when a horse's iron shoe strikes a stone pavement and elicits a spark. What really happens in this case is that the rapid motion of the horse's iron shoe is stopped by the stone pavement ; it is probably not stopped entirely at once, for a dint in the pavement will testify that there has been some motion of matter as the result of the stroke of the horse's foot ; but stopped it is in the end. Then, by that subtle interchange of power which goes on through the particles of all existent things, the plain direct motion is transmuted into that other kind of motion, which we call heat and light ; and the evidence of this lies in the spark which is elicited by the collision of the iron shoe with the pavement.

Now very much in the same manner, according to Helmholtz (allowing for the difference between a sudden stroke and a constant pressure), the force of gravitation acts between the particles of the sun, contracting these particles into a narrower compass : so it does now, and so it has done from the first beginning of the solar nebula. The internal parts of the sun resist and hinder this contraction, and thus heat is evolved ; the amount of heat being measured by the amount of motion that is stopped by the resistance. Roughly speaking, if the sun contracts a mile in its diameter every eleven years, it will give us all the heat that we now receive from it<sup>1</sup>. How imperceptible such a contraction must be, will be appreciated if we remember that a mile is not much more than a millionth part of the sun's diameter.

We see then, that mathematical calculation does not forbid our regarding the theory of Helmholtz as the real solution of the

<sup>1</sup> See, for the exact reckoning, Sir Robert Ball's book, *The Earth's Beginning*, pp. 370-374.

problem of the origin of the sun and stars. But the theory, in its full compass, is as yet unverified. It may be asked, what would be full verification of it? If half a dozen stars went out suddenly, that would be a considerable verification; not absolute even then; but such an event would prove that it was quite possible for a star to get to the end of its illuminating power; and the explanation, that the substance of the star had been so compressed as to have become solid and to have lost all capability of further compression, would have very seriously to be entertained; and we might consequently fear the same fate for our sun also. But this very formidable piece of verification has not taken place so far; and we may without over-presumption consider what objections may lie in the way of the theory, considered as the sole and exclusive account of the matter.

First, then, it is to be observed that the theory of Helmholtz makes the law of gravitation the primary cause, out of which all other known physical forces proceed; gravitation causes pressure, and from pressure proceed heat, light, electricity, magnetism, elasticity and chemical forces. But is gravitation entitled to this primary position among physical forces? This is not at all the conclusion to which the most recent science pointed, even before the discovery of radium. Among the molecules of matter, at those infinitesimal distances where electricity and radio-activity have their play, gravitation does not appear to work at all. These considerations are not unimportant; it might however be said against them that no method of building up the sun and stars by means of electricity or by the other forces named had ever been suggested, whereas by gravitation such a method had been suggested.

After the discovery of radium, however, this answer could not be so confidently made. Not only does radium preserve its effluent energy for a wonderfully long time, which in itself would tend to prolong the term of the sun's luminous power, if sufficient amount of radium and kindred substances exist in the sun; but also it was discovered that one cause of this prolongation of the active energy of radium lay in the fact that the atoms of it were being decomposed. The possibility of the decomposition of an atom had before been denied; but if it be possible, must we not revise our opinion as to the amount of latent energy in every one of the orbs of heaven? This consideration has really influenced physicists in their views as to the durability of the sun's light and heat; and it certainly has some force; how much, is not quite easy for us to say at the present time.



I confess, that it is in another direction that I look for the full truth as to the origin of the self-glowing luminaries of heaven. What is there to prevent our thinking that the sun and the stars are the results of organising power, of the power of life, in some respects even of the power of mind ? What do we know of life ? We know it as it exists on the earth. Even on the earth the forms of life are very diverse and susceptible of change ; and even on the earth the spiritual element in life is singularly subtle, and quite beyond sensuous perception. By what reasoning is it possible to justify the assumption that life must always present itself in that obvious tangible form under which we know it on earth ; or rather, under which we know some of its constituent parts ; for even on the earth there are some elements of life which are neither visible nor tangible ? If there be any truth at all in human immortality, it would certainly not appear that our immortal part is visible or tangible in the ordinary sense. Is no allowance to be made for possible faculties not yet attained by man ?

It was from a sense of the diversity of living forms that the great astronomer Laplace, writing more than a century ago<sup>1</sup>, urged the probability that living beings exist on the other planets of the solar system, suited in each case to the temperature of their respective abodes. It is not an unreasonable argument ; but when the nature and power of organisation are considered, has not such an argument enhanced force as applied to the sun ? To organise, is to arrange the powers which lie at our disposal in such a way that they shall not be impeded by each other's action, but have their full effect. Is not the sun's energy, whether spiritual or non-spiritual in its origin, exceedingly effective ? is it not much more effective than the solid matter which forms the mass of the earth ? If we admit the thought that it is organised at all, is it not much better organised than the earth is ?

The solution here suggested of the origin of the solar and stellar fires has the distinctive feature that it rests on mystery. It answers the challenge of the physicists, " From whence will you get the new energy which is to replace that which is dissipated into the regions of space ? " not by bringing forward any new tangible store of energy, but by saying that wherever life exists, the process of organisation which is inherent in life draws energy out of an unknown and mysterious source ; and that the higher

<sup>1</sup> Laplace, *Exposition du Système du Monde*, Liv. 5<sup>me</sup>, c. vi. See the translation of the passage in Sir David Brewster's *More Worlds than One*, chapter xvi.

the organisation is, the more is it in contact with this mysterious source. It is not seen how the new energy comes ; it unites itself with the known forms of visible energy, but adds something to them. Let any one who denies the truth of this explain, if he can, so simple an act as the picking up of a pin from the ground. There are plenty of known forces, physical and chemical, concerned in that act ; but if a full explanation of the act is to be given, it has to be added, over and above all the affirmation of physical and chemical forces, that somebody wanted to pick up the pin.

The region of mystery is not to be denied ; are we to suppose that mystery attaches to the destinies of man, but is banished from the starry heavens ? do plain mathematical and physical laws explain every part of this infinite universe, except only the little corner where man exists ? If this is a preposterous supposition, then let it be remembered how much more mysterious life is than anything else known on earth. Recognising this, we shall feel that the mystery of the heavens is probably also connected with life, in a manner beyond our present comprehension.

It is then the conclusion of this whole argument, that the sun is not, as far as we know at present, in danger of dying out ; the earth is not in danger of losing the heat and light which we enjoy to-day. The development of man, then, in the future ages is not necessarily for a finite number of years only, after which it must cease ; and the history of the past is not subject to this great disparagement, which would result if the race of men were liable to be cut short by inexorable physical laws, and thenceforth be no more remembered for ever.

It is the supreme interest of history that I have been vindicating, and on this ground, that all the history of the past is the seed of an infinite development in the future. The value of this will be felt ; though attempts to foresee the future, either of the race or of the individual, with precision, are not likely to be very successful.

One thing more I must say with respect to the distinguished man of science on whom in the main I have been commenting. Lamentably poor and barren as we must think the starry universe, if the theory of Helmholtz is the full truth respecting its nature and genesis ; little though we can esteem the amendment, if the only relief comes through the decomposition of atoms ; this is not the same as saying that the theory can be wholly disregarded. Helmholtz deals with real forces, and traces their effect on the supposition that these forces act singly ; and there may be cases



in which these forces do act singly, or at any rate in which the force of gravitation is so predominant, that other forces may be neglected. We have to bear this in mind, though we must certainly hope, and may I think believe, that the full explanation of the starry universe is much more mysterious, and much more connected with the things which we most love, honour, and revere, than it would be if the theory of Helmholtz were the full truth.

I have been vindicating the honour of history, but I have not thus far been narrating history. To narrate history is however the purpose of my book; and with what epoch of time shall I begin the narration? The proper answer, it would seem, must be: With the first appearance of man upon the surface of the earth. That, at all events, is the beginning of human history; but there are considerations which will lead us to think that the time before the beginning of human history ought not to be quite left out of our survey. Biologists tell us, and I quite agree with them, that the human race is the offspring of an antecedent race, which was infra-human. Biologists do not identify that antecedent race with any existing species of ape; though they do say that that antecedent race was the common progenitor both of mankind, and of apes. Taking this general view, what was the sign of the first arrival of mankind on this earthly scene?

I cannot myself doubt, that the acquisition of the faculty of speech was the fact which distinguished for the first time the race of man from the lower animals. "Articulate-speaking men"; such is the epithet which Homer attaches to men, to signify their distinctive characteristic; and there is none other of equal significance. Speech it was that united the race of men with a power to which no other species has approached; speech enabled cooperation to begin in those works by which life is defended and strengthened; in the making of tools, in the building of huts, in the kindling of fires. Speech found a natural aid in the increased flexibility of the human hand; and the upright posture which man assumed in walking on the ground gave him a larger survey of the things around him; but neither of these developments of the human body had effects so powerful and so penetrating as that whereby mental communication was promoted, and the purposes of mankind were made more effective through union. Of all his physical powers, speech is the one which man could least afford to do without; and of all his physical powers, speech is the one most akin to the mind.

It cannot be denied that a complete history of mankind ought to take some notice of that momentous series of events, whereby the nascent upward striving creature, that had the germ of man in him, became truly and fully man. We have indeed no written records of that time, and it is impossible that we should have had such ; the conditions forbid it. Nor is it easy to see how any material signs could have reached us, showing the steps by which so great an advance was made ; at all events we have no such material signs.

But is analogy of no value as a guide ? Speech is a faculty, but we must also assume it to be an art, won by trial, by effort, by experiment, in slow gradations and with much patience. Along with the growth of this art many other things must have grown ; the brain of man must have gathered complexity, his tongue and lips a finer tissue of nerve fibre, besides the alteration in stature and hand-structure, already spoken of. Is there anything else we can discern as practically necessary, if such a period of change was to result in practical success ? Friendly feelings must have prevailed more extensively than in previous ages ; for the practice of speech must for a long time have implied friendly relations between those who thus sought to communicate ideas with each other ; the suspicion which enemies entertain of each other would in early days debar all attempt at trying to speak to an enemy. Thus a more stable social system would rise along with speech. At the same time that famous principle, " natural selection " or the " survival of the fittest " would show itself ; for on the whole and in the long run those who had made any advance towards speech would have the superiority over those who had not ; those incapable of speech would be driven into remoter and wilder places, and would remain in the animal state.

A point to be carefully remembered is, that the art of speech could not have arisen through any deliberate attempt to learn it ; the value of articulation would for a long time be experienced in single instances, and would slowly fit itself on to that vocalisation which had been long known ; for animals can express by cries their feelings, and to some slight extent ideas also. In the first learning of the art of speech by the human race there would be no such stimulus as the young child is conscious of at the present day, when it hears its elders all around it uttering sounds which it tries to imitate ; the stimulus in that primæval age would come from the direct sense that it was to the interest of the man



himself to frame the sound which had some material signification, because if he did frame it, some other man would catch his meaning and be able to help him. Thus it would be the most vigorous who would learn the art of speech, as distinguished from their less enterprising fellows ; and the learning, as I have said, would be instinctive and answering to the immediate occasion, not resulting from the conscious knowledge that there was an art to be learned.

I have been giving an account which rests entirely on analogy, and on what must be presumed from the nature of the case, not in any degree on specific evidence ; this is what we are obliged to do in respect of all terrestrial events which took place before that comparatively recent period when the art of writing was invented. Geology, for example, could not stir a single step without the assumption that the strata exposed on mountain sides and in railway cuttings were deposited according to the analogy of the earthy particles which are deposited at the present day in the seas that wash the coasts of continents and islands.

If then analogy and the intrinsic nature of the case are our only guides in regard to the primæval period with which I am now dealing ; if, up to a certain point and with proper limitations, they are fairly dependable guides ; is there anything that we can infer from them as to the religious, the divine aspect of human evolution at this its incipient stage ? I spoke, some pages back, of the strength which comes to men through prayer ; is there any reason why these incipient men, these men still in the stage of being formed into men, should not have prayed to an unknown Power ? Possibly they may have prayed superstitiously, as many men since have done, without absolutely frustrating the intrinsic value of the act ; they may have held that an unknown power resided in trees, in stones, in the sun or in the starry heavens. Prayer mingled with errors may still be a source of strength, although not of unmingled strength ; and prayer without words is not necessarily injured by the absence of words, if the need of aid and the desire for aid be felt in the spirit ; it is no unnatural belief that the human race arose out of its animal surroundings by divine help. The divine help would promote especially those sentiments of peaceful friendship and alliance which were so important in the first beginning of articulate communication of ideas ; a stability would be felt in the status of man, greater than that which had belonged to the animals ; even if quarrels between men occurred afterwards,

this stability, though in some degree imperilled, would not be lost. It is not easy, judging from what we know of religion in human history, to think that it was altogether absent as a cause in the first beginnings of man; and the nature of its causative action would be the strengthening of the human heart in that most critical epoch, when the new tie constituted by language was being formed between man and man.

If the above remarks are justly reasoned out, the very beginning of human history was founded on a manifestation of the divine power, spiritual in its essential nature, but extending in its effects into the material sphere. Let me assume this to be true; is it possible to refrain from casting a glance on that immensely long series of ages, during which living organisms existed on the earth's surface or in the ocean depths, but man had not yet appeared? Can we think of the animal life which existed before man as altogether without kinship to man? We cannot, if there be any truth in the evolutionary view as applied to the human species. If the animal life existent before human life appeared had a certain kinship with human life, and was itself struggling upwards, and was on the way to a higher development; can we deny that the word "history" has a real meaning in reference to this life, which was not yet endowed with the full human dignity? It appears to be a just inference that we are here still partly in the province of history, and not of mere physical science.

But in dealing with the life which existed on the earth before man appeared, we find ourselves at once in the middle of all those theories which have sprung from the famous work of Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, first published shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century. If in some respects the biological theories to which I refer appear to me defective, their extraordinary compass, and the illuminating power which they have had on all human thought since that date, must still be acknowledged; and it will be best briefly to describe these theories as they have generally been held, before endeavouring to indicate where the insertion of spiritual causes appears necessary for their full and reasonable validity.

It is a familiar fact that children have a general resemblance to their parents, while yet no child was ever in all points absolutely like father or mother. There is variation; and if we suppose variations to accumulate through a long series of generations, the child may in the end become very unlike its remote



ancestor. So it is with all creatures ; the progeny is similar to, and yet differs from, both its parents. Even when we come to those creatures which do not enjoy the blessing of two parents, which propagate by one part simply separating off from another part, it is certain that a general similarity still holds between parent and offspring ; and that there is difference between parent and offspring is also not doubtful, though it would be too much to say that it is always obvious at a glance, especially when we come to such tiny creatures as the *amœba* ; but then an ordinary person may think two sheep precisely similar, which to the shepherd are distinguished by a hundred different traits. So it is with plants ; every plant, whether it propagates by seed or by suckers or in any other way, produces a plant like itself, and yet not entirely like. Variation, in the midst of a general likeness, is always taking place in the realm of life.

Can we put any limits on the degree of such variation ? No doubt, in finite time, the variation must have some limits. But the earth, to judge by the deposits of geological strata, has lasted an exceedingly long time ; our limits may be wide ; the variations of living organisms may have been, are almost certain to have been, far greater than that which has been known in recorded experience. Is it possible that variation can have acted, during hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of years, so effectively, that out of one original stock, diverging in many directions, all the animals of feline kind may have sprung ; animals so diverse as the lion, tiger, leopard, and the common cat ? Is it possible that all dogs and foxes and wolves may have sprung from a single stock of wild wolves ? To take a wider range, is it possible that all birds may have sprung from a wingless set of creatures, possibly from the same wingless set of creatures ; that all animals which suckle their young have sprung from a more primitive set of animals which did not suckle their young ? Or—to take wider range still—that all vertebrate creatures have had an ancestry that was invertebrate ? If this should have happened, then variation has been indeed an important factor in the history of terrestrial life.

Various thinkers in the earlier half of the nineteenth century approached or even reached the opinion that living organisms had arrived at their present forms by a slow process of development, after the manner just indicated. Lamarck is the most famous of these ; and the philosophical force of his view must not be underrated. I will quote the brief description of it from

Merz's *History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. II. p. 314 :

The idea is worked out in the *Philosophie Zoologique*, that if we commence the study of living creatures from below, and from the side of vegetable life, we are inevitably led to the conviction that the surrounding conditions and influences, the environment, are gradually and slowly modifying the elementary organisms, and through habit and inheritance developing the higher ones, endowing them with more specialised organs and more complex powers and activities.

Still, the view thus enunciated failed to obtain general acceptance, mainly from the want of any observed instance of variation actually taking place under our eyes. But shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century Charles Darwin brought before the notice of naturalists a variation frequently occurring, not of the largest kind, but considerable and permanent enough to deserve being taken as evidence of what might possibly happen on a much larger scale. This was the variation of animals and plants under human control. Horses, cows, sheep, pigeons in the animal world, numerous flowers and fruits in the world of plants, have actually been changed in size and in the character of their respective parts through a process governed by the human will. It would seem at first sight that this must imply a knowledge on our part of the causes of such variation, and a capability of wielding such causes. This however is not exactly the case ; the actual causes which begin to change an organism in any direction are exceedingly subtle, and can hardly be said to be known at all ; the human will effects change in the character of the animals and plants subject to it, not by originating variations, but by choosing, when variations have somehow come into being, which shall survive and which shall not survive. One variation may be an improvement (from the human point of view), another a deterioration ; man allows the improved animal or plant to produce progeny, and forbids this to those which have deteriorated. The progeny resembles the parent ; and thus mankind, without actually dominating, guides nature. The improved progeny alone survives. To the process thus described Darwin gave the title of Artificial Selection.

Now it struck Darwin that all through the world of living things there is going on a process which resembles this artificial selection, and which, if variations are once supposed to be going on, would settle which variation was to survive and which was to perish. One very well known instance of this process is the



disappearance of the North American Indians before the white races ; a disappearance not absolutely complete at the present day, but complete over the main part of the area over which the wild copper-coloured tribes once roamed. The stronger race has prevailed over the weaker race ; and there is everywhere this tendency, not only among men but among all animals, and also among plants. Quite apart from any deliberate direction or purpose known to us, the stronger organisms (or at least the organisms which are best adapted to their surroundings) tend to survive, and the weaker dwindle and decrease in numbers. If then there is continual variation going on in the forms and the structure of all living creatures inhabiting the earth, the principle just described, which Darwin called Natural Selection, will determine which creatures shall survive and which shall perish.

If artificial selection, acting on those continual variations which arise in the form and structure of living creatures, is able to perpetuate these spontaneously arising differences, so that after a long course of human supervision and management such different forms as the drayhorse and the racehorse, the small wiry shaggy Highland cattle and the ponderous shorthorn, the slim greyhound and the sturdy mastiff, will come into existence, the differing pairs having in each case come from a common stock, may not the same sort of differentiation be produced by natural selection ; and as natural selection has had more than a thousand times the length of time to operate in, as compared with artificial selection, may not the results have been more than a thousand times as great ?

Such was the question which Darwin asked, and answered in the affirmative ; and naturalists at once felt that a new cause had been discovered, which might perhaps explain the reason why living creatures all over the earth's surface have arrived at the characteristics which they respectively present. Moreover, when once it was felt that a solid ground had been reached, on which the theory of a development of differing types growing out of the same stock could rest, it was also felt by naturalists that the aspect of living organisms, with their large similarities and differentiations within differentiations, exactly corresponded to what we should have, if the theory of development be true ; and a final confirmation of the theory lay in the observed fact, that creatures so different as a man and a rabbit, in the course of their formation before birth, are for a certain period indistinguishable from one another ; the differences originate as the

growth proceeds. It is natural to think that each individual does to a certain extent recapitulate the history of his race ; and if so, human beings and rabbits, notwithstanding the immense difference that lies between them now, have sprung from stocks which, long ages ago, were identical.

One difficulty, indeed, lay in the way of the Darwinian theory. Though, when a particular species begins to separate into stronger and weaker forms, there will always be a tendency towards the disappearance of the weaker forms, while the stronger survive ; yet if the weaker specimens vanish entirely, and the stronger alone remain, there will be no separation of one species into two ; all that will have happened will be that the species has grown stronger. It is only if some of the weaker forms of the species remain, as well as the stronger, that any explanation of the division of one species into two is possible by means of the Darwinian theory ; and this accordingly is what we must suppose to have happened in a countless number of cases. It is quite conceivable that this was so ; but then the question arises, how can it have come to pass that the difference between the stronger and weaker forms was not swamped by interbreeding, which would have made them all one species again ?

The difficulty just noticed admits of a variety of solutions, which are by no means inconsistent with one another, and have no doubt acted concurrently ; it is not possible in the present state of knowledge to determine the relative value of solutions, or in other words the extent to which each cause has operated. Darwin laid the greatest stress on the separation in space as the principal cause which would prevent the intercrossing of the stronger and weaker branches of a divided species ; and he justly remarked on the great influence which geological changes would have in promoting this separation. But he instanced also other possible causes ; " I can bring a considerable catalogue of facts," he wrote, " showing that within the same area, varieties of the same animal can long remain distinct, from haunting different stations, from breeding at slightly different seasons, or from varieties of the same kind preferring to pair together<sup>1</sup>." Of these causes, the last is specially noticeable, as bringing mental disposition and will into the matter ; and those who observe how powerful a very slight difference in external form may be in creating dislike between two races (as for instance between

<sup>1</sup> *Origin of Species*, p. 103 of 1st edition ; p. 126 of edition of 1906 (with very slight variation).



the white man and the negro at the present day) will be of opinion that this has been one of the strongest causes in confirming a separation that has once begun between the stronger and weaker branches in any species. It is a cause that will be equally effective in the ocean and on land ; whereas the mere physical separation cannot be as effective in the ocean as on the land. For the land has been perpetually broken up in a way to make intercommunication difficult ; the ocean is in the main continuous (for inland seas, even the Caspian, are but insignificant exceptions); and we have no reason to think that the case was ever otherwise. I believe however that great ocean depths do act as causes of severance. An additional possible cause of permanent differences of structure was suggested by Romanes, namely a tendency to barrenness in the intercourse between the two separating branches of a species.

In whatever proportion the above causes may have acted, they do collectively constitute a full answer to the difficulty just noticed in the Darwinian theory ; and in confirmation of the belief that such causes do act, it may be added that the existing varieties of the dog can hardly have always owed their diversity to a deliberate intention of men that they should be kept separate (though this cause has in some degree operated). Hence the theory of Darwin (suggested simultaneously and independently by Wallace, though not with so much fullness of illustration as Darwin brought forward) takes rank now as an established scientific truth ; although important instances of structural changes in any species have never been observed in the actual course of their making.

Yet, accepting the general hypothesis of evolution, as applied to the origin of living organisms ; accepting too the importance of the principle of natural selection, which in certain of its aspects is a matter of ordinary experience ; are we entitled to say that the whole theory of the origin of terrestrial life has been made plain to us thereby ? So much as this Darwin himself did not affirm ; on the contrary, he recognised in explicit terms the inadequacy of natural selection to explain every part of the process of evolution.

"Natural Selection," he wrote, "depends on the survival under various complex circumstances of the best-fitted individuals, but has no relation whatever to the primary cause of any modification of structure." *Animals and Plants under Domestication*, ch. XXIII. (vol. II. p. 272 of 1st edition).

It is obvious, of course, that natural selection cannot begin

to operate until the modification of structure which is to be selected as dominant in the future has already come into existence. How, then, are we to arrive at a knowledge of the primary causes of modification? To this difficult question biologists have naturally been slow to give an answer. No one can find fault with their caution; but unfortunately they have too often treated the question as a negligible one, which is quite a different matter. An especial importance belongs to the question of "the primary cause of any modification of structure" (I quote Darwin's phrase); and for this reason, that it is a question which brings before us the whole being of any living creature, not merely the visible organism, but that which underlies the visible organism, the motives and needs of the creature. It will scarcely be denied that the most primitive creatures have needs, and have motives. Mr Headley, in his interesting work *Life and Evolution* (p. 175), tells us how an amœba (an animalcule consisting of only a single cell) rejected a morsel of flint and ate a diatom (a very small single-cell plant), thereby showing clearly a perceptive preference. The amœba had a need, and had a motive; and if we go higher in the scale of creatures we shall find more complex needs, and higher motives. If we are to inquire into the primary causes of modification of structure, we can hardly make a greater mistake than by neglecting the finest and subtlest elements of that being which is so intimately connected with the structure, which expresses itself through the structure. It may be difficult to apprehend motives, still more to apprehend the workings of the animal mind through a long continuance of time; but just as we should make a great mistake, in contemplating the works of man, if we ignored the labour and the pain, the thoughts and the hopes, by means of which these works came into existence, so we shall make a great mistake, in contemplating the visible structures in which life has enshrined itself, if we try to solve the question of the original formation of those structures without paying regard to the deepest characteristic of life, those feelings and purposes which collectively we name the soul.

It will not be expected that, in the few pages which are at my command, I shall do more than touch on the way in which the mind and purpose of any creature may be conceived to have operated towards a change of its external structure; but a few instances may be given. The first shall be from a quarter where perhaps it would not be expected that any instance would



be found—from the history of plants. It will of course be understood that, in using the word history, I have no thought of direct evidence in my mind ; we have to be guided by inferences ; and it may be useful to remark how often, in everyday experience, we are accustomed to say that we see something when we are really inferring something. For instance, in reading a friend's hastily written letter, we shall often be compelled to infer that a certain set of strokes means a word to which it has no natural resemblance.

To come to my instance in plant-history ; it is generally conceded that in order of time, water-plants preceded land-plants ; this is probable both from the shape of the earth, which must have been an originally liquid mass before it was solidified, and also the structural signs point to this order of development. It was when land first emerged from the waters of the primæval ocean that land-plants began to be ; and how ? By the invention (if I may so call it) of a root. That plant was indeed a great inventor which first struck a root into the ground ! In the remote ages of which I am speaking, some sea-plant (which had previously derived its nurture only from waves and air and sunlight) was left by the tide just below the highest high-water mark ; the water it received in this way was not adequate to its needs ; it thrust out a fine filament into the ground, just as heretofore it had thrust out filaments into the sea ; and behold, there was water underneath ! That fine filament was the first root ; it was evoked by the need of the sea-plant ; the sea-plant had a motive in sending it out. The habit of root-making spread among plants ; the moist ground near the estuaries was soon covered with vegetation, and presently the drier land remote from the ocean was also covered, as plants learned to thrust in their roots deeper and deeper. What an accession of strength came therefrom ! The solid earth in its depths proved to have treasures of nourishment far beyond what the waves could bring ; for though the first land-plants, mosses and ferns, were not greatly superior to the seaweed, yet presently the great forest trees began to grow, sending their tons of timber high up into the air (hundreds of feet in the case of the American sequoia) ; and what comparison can the limp seaweed hold with such a display of strength as this ?

Land-animals were in the end fully as much superior to the denizens of the sea as land-plants are to water-plants ; but it is not so easy to trace their development. The first land-animals,

the reptiles, do not appear to be greatly superior to the fishes. But when warm-blooded creatures came to the front in their two main divisions, birds with their power of flight, and mammalia bringing forth their young alive and fostering them with a new affection, then the power and range of animal life rose very greatly ; but by what steps the reptile won development into these two higher forms it is not easy for us to imagine. More simple were two great advances made by animal life while yet under the waters of the ocean ; the winning of special senses, of which sight was the most remarkable ; and the sheltering of the most delicate part of the nervous system by the formation of a spine. These were not aggressive advances ; they injured none ; and they are of a kind peculiarly marked by receptivity. Not action, but patience, must have been the most prominent necessity while the changes were being matured ; and the patience must have been deliberate. The first beginnings of sight lay in the greater sensitiveness of a certain portion of the skin to the waves of the heavenly ether ; this feeling must have been pleasurable in itself, before it was known to be the method by which a world can be revealed to us. Receptivity is the quality indicated by the sense of sight, as by the other senses ; and though it would be an error to suppose that this receptivity was not mingled with action, there must have been occasions when receptivity alone was in play, while the creature was winning the faculty of sight. We call sight a faculty ; but evidently seeing was at first (like speech) an art, won with labour, inspired by hope. Purpose there must have been in it, though purpose of a much more gentle and limited character than what we generally call by that name ; no creature ever thought, " I will learn to see," any more than any man ever said to himself, " I will learn to speak." These primitive powers are learned, but not consciously learned ; the purpose of the learner is confined to very small elements indeed, which only become great by accumulation, and only after a lapse of time far exceeding the life of a single individual.

So, likewise, the processes by which vertebrate creatures arose out of the invertebrate must have been very gentle and slow ; very small, scarcely perceptible, purposes must have been the animating cause of the change.

Of developments in structure of more doubtful value, such as the retractile claw of the feline genus, I need not perhaps speak here.



Purpose we must conclude there is in development, in the sense explained above ; but are we to acknowledge a divine purpose in the whole series of growing life ? It will be pertinent, in relation to this question, to quote some expressions of Charles Darwin himself, who, though not feeling himself able to acknowledge distinctly the being of God, yet was incapable of refusing to express what he felt to be a genuine instinct. He wrote to Professor W. Graham :

You have expressed my inward conviction . . . that the universe is not the result of chance. *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, vol. I. p. 316.

Again, he wrote to Lord Farrer :

If we consider the whole universe, the mind refuses to look at it as the outcome of chance, that is, without design and purpose. The whole question seems to me insoluble, for I cannot put much or any faith in the so-called intuitions of the human mind. *More Letters*, vol. I. p. 395.

No one ought to call that question easy, which Darwin called insoluble. Nor have intuitions, unconfirmed by experience, any value. Still, there are two purposes which we may fairly attribute to the Divine Will, and which will indicate in some measure how the Divine Will may have operated in bringing life on the earth to its present state of growth ; first, the purpose of strengthening all faculties which may promote living energy in the whole of creation ; secondly, the purpose of uniting the children of life, so that they may mutually help one another, and if possible have conscious affection for one another. Religious experience does, I think, confirm the reality of these divine purposes.

## CHAPTER II

### ANCIENT RELIGION : BABYLONIA, EGYPT, INDIA

IN the foregoing chapter, I spoke of the relation of man to the universe, and of the belief, which we are at liberty to entertain, that divine and spiritual action have place in other parts of the universe, besides the earth on which we live ; and of the reasons why we are at liberty to entertain this belief. Moreover I said that the same philosophy, which teaches us that man has kinship with all other terrestrial life, leads us to believe that the divine action has place in terrestrial life other than human life ; and I endeavoured faintly to indicate of what nature this divine action must be, in beings outside man. But it is of course man in whom our religious inquiries centre ; and the beginning of man dates from the time when articulate speech was first fashioned into a real art, a successful faculty. Along with speech, the flexible human hand and the upright human posture came into being, and were causes of advance. We know that during all these early periods, advance was being made, but how it was made we do not know. The particulars of the advance we do however to some extent know. Man discovered how to kindle fire ; he learnt to make flint hatchets ; he built houses and villages ; he tamed horses, and subjugated other animals, partly to help him in his labours, partly to be used for food. Metals were discovered and wrought into tools and weapons. He snared and hunted animals, and used their skins as clothes. The art of agriculture slowly began. Men formed communities ; and ranks, offices, and specific duties were assigned to different individuals. How greatly did man soar above the animals now !

But of these ancient days we have no record. We may conjecture the historical causes through which progress was made ; but conjecture it is, not evidence. Doubtless there were heroes then, wise thinkers, keen observers, tender self-sacrificing women, as millennium after millennium passed by, and human



worth increased. But neither heroes nor sages, nor women worthiest of love, could in those days hand down any memorial of themselves to posterity ; for even if there were poets among them, as doubtless there came to be in the processes of time, these poets were ever liable to be thrust out of memory by the inflowing and accumulating interests of the age that succeeded them, before which the remoter events of the past became pale and dim. A blurred memory was preserved for a time, but inevitably vanished at last.

But the time came when this defect was, in great measure at any rate, to be remedied.

On a piece of mammoth tusk, preserved from a period long antecedent to all written or remembered history, there still exists the earliest known work of artistic representation. There, rudely engraved on the tusk, is the picture of the mammoth himself. Doubtless the work was done with some metallic instrument ; and doubtless the carver worked it, not only for the delectation of himself, but for his fellows ; and the design of it was to preserve, clear and distinct, the impression which the mighty beast had made on those who had seen him in the flesh. In that design lay more than the beginning of the arts of sculpture and painting ; there lay in it the beginning of the art of writing.

As it is intelligent speech which distinguishes man from the lower animals, so it is the art of writing which decisively distinguishes civilised man from his predecessors, even though many of those predecessors were above the mere savage. After speech, writing is the greatest invention in human history, the invention which has raised man most. It would be grossly to underrate its value were we to say that it has multiplied the powers of man a thousandfold. Not only has the art of writing increased the efficiency of human action by making it possible to communicate thought from a distance, but also (and this was a still greater benefit) it for the first time shed illumination on the ages of the past ; experience was thus handed down from age to age. No more need valiant deeds and wise thoughts be forgotten ; some portion of them, and a continually increasing portion, was perpetuated in durable records. So, it is to be hoped, will it be for ever ; though we know not how far the art of writing may be transcendentalised as time goes on, or how far memory may be enlarged and strengthened as we obtain fuller access to the heart of all reality.

We know something of the art of writing in its earlier stages. It is not like the art of speech, the beginnings of which we may imperfectly imagine, but cannot know. Here we have some actual evidence ; not enough for a full explanation of the details of the manner in which it arose ; but enough to give us a fair notion. The earliest known types of writing, the hieroglyphs of Egypt, are sculptures, just like the carving on the mammoth tusk ; but with a difference. The graven picture of the mammoth stood for nothing but a mammoth ; but the hieroglyphic sculpture stood for something beyond that which is immediately represented. The sculptured figure is no longer valued for its accuracy as a representation ; it is valued because, in connexion with other figures, it represents a complex train of ideas, of which the greater part were not actually represented, but were conveyed by natural association to the mind of the beholder. This, in fact, was exactly what speech had done in its appeal to the sense of hearing ; the articulated sounds called up trains of ideas ; and long custom made the association easy and effortless. The art of writing is simply the transference of a symbol which appeals to the *eye* to a symbol which appeals to the *ear*. Starting as a branch of pictorial art, it became swayed and bent by a purpose remote from the pictorial art, the purpose of making speech visible ; and the reason why it was desired to make speech visible was because impressions made on the sense of hearing could not be preserved, whereas impressions made on the sense of sight could be preserved. Thus, while writing began with being a set of pictures, those pictures were for human convenience so transmuted, that at last they became simply representative of certain sounds, the sounds used in human speech. This, though a development, was not an ordinary development ; for under it, the pictorial art does not simply expand, but it is made subservient to a new office altogether. Beginning with a simple appeal to the sense of sight, it ends with being an appeal, through association, to the sense of hearing. The mammoth carved on the tusk brought the actual mammoth into the memory or imagination of the beholder : the word "mammoth" as written has no force to do this ; but the written word "mammoth" brings the sound of the spoken word "mammoth" before the mind of the reader, and the spoken word brings the idea of the mammoth with it. Even now, I believe that no person, however apt a reader, ever passes at once from the sight of the written word to the thought of the thing signified by it, without the intervening memory of



the sound of the spoken word. That intervening memory may be very slight, but I believe that it is always a part of the mental process when there is real understanding of what is written.

How this most curious transmutation took place, a transmutation not at all primarily designed, exceedingly difficult, and only accomplished at last because the need of it was so great, cannot be investigated here. But it is of interest to have before our minds the countries in which the earliest specimens of writing are found ; and these are Egypt and Babylonia. In both of these countries the earliest writing has still the pictorial character which reminds us of its origin, being what is called hieroglyphic ; Egypt has hieroglyphs more abundantly than Babylonia, but this is merely because the dry air of Egypt has preserved them better. We cannot trace the art further back than the hieroglyphs of Egypt and Babylonia ; but if we were asked to conjecture the place of its absolute origin, the choice must lie between these two countries. If the thought came before us that possibly it originated in China, we should have to reflect that there are no such signs of a primitive hieroglyphic origin in China as there are in Egypt and Babylonia ; and moreover there is reason to believe that the Chinese in their first beginnings came from Central Asia, which was then very much more fertile than it is now. The Chinese would then learn the art in the west, and would carry it with them to the east. Then, as communication between east and west became more difficult, the Chinese remained stationary in the art as they had learned it ; they had not quite the fiery progressive genius of the western nations.

The progress of writing lay through a stage in which a separate sign was given to every word. That stage we still find in China and Japan, but nowhere in the west ; though in the west we find this approximation to it that, in some of the ancient Sumerian languages which exist in cuneiform script in Babylonia and elsewhere, we find more than six hundred separate signs, some of them plainly pictorial. But the number of these signs was continually being reduced in the west, the pictorial element slowly vanishing, and comparatively few signs being found sufficient to represent all the necessary sounds of a language ; until (probably through the enterprising Phœnicians) an alphabet of between twenty and thirty letters was found sufficient to express to the eye any spoken word. But China had stopped short long before this stage was reached, the Chinese written language still requiring thirty thousand signs to express all its words ; a result which is

hardly conceivable, if full and free communication had existed continuously between China and Western Asia. Hence it is probable, as I said just now, that in primæval days a degree of communication existed between the extreme east and the extreme west of Asia, which at a later time was broken off; whether through any physical change or through racial hostility, is unknown to us.

Egypt and Babylonia are the countries in which the early development of writing is most distinctly visible to us; and from their records we know that they were great and important countries from every point of view. More than that, they were distinctly religious countries. For more than four millenniums before the Christian era have we some knowledge of their history; and from the earliest times religion is inwrought into its texture with an assurance and a constancy which we should look for in vain in the histories of to-day. It is true that their religion has frequently been called "false"; polytheistic and idolatrous it certainly was, with few and doubtful exceptions. But the presence of error, in these large and mysterious subjects, must not be taken as proving that the whole is valueless. Who is there that will refuse to acknowledge the sublimity of the feeling shown in that sentence which was inscribed (as Plutarch tells us) on the temple of the veiled Isis, at Sais in Egypt:

I am all that was, and that is, and that shall be; and no mortal has yet lifted up my veil.

In what century of Egyptian history these words were composed is not known to us; but the sentiment which they breathe is more like the earlier than the later records; they tell of the uplifted heart, though not of the heart which prays; yet that these ancient people did pray, we know, and as much in the early as in the late times. Though we have not the evidence before us which alone could enable us to trace causes accurately, we shall be disposed to believe that the Babylonians and Egyptians of very ancient times derived strength from their religion, with whatever errors it may have been associated; and that strength would aid in the discovery of methods by which thought could be made visible to the sight and perpetuated, or in other words the invention of writing.

Having said this, it is necessary to add some remarks as to the conditions which must have prevailed while the invention was in the process of making. It is involved in the nature of the case, that during both these processes, the learning to speak



and the learning to write, a spirit of mutual friendliness must have prevailed among those who were elaborating the art. Mutual hostility would have destroyed the desire of intercommunication, and would have greatly impeded the attention which was necessary for bringing the art to perfection. Yet it is also true that the earliest instances of the art of writing are generally the celebration of some victory in war. But we must distinguish between the invention of the art, and the use which was made of it after it was invented. When it was once invented, the most powerful persons would be those who would use it most; and the most powerful persons in those days would be the greatest warriors. This is why the art of writing does not appear to us an instance of the value of a peaceful temper, while yet in reality it is so; and for the same reason it is not to us an instance of the value of religion, while yet we cannot but believe that it is so. The great kings who perpetuated the memory of their victories in sculptures or in hieroglyphics, and who celebrated at the same time the deity by whom they believed themselves to have been favoured, were not hypocrites; and there was even something of humility in their acknowledging a greater power than their own, to whom they owed allegiance. But such humility is quite compatible with a great deal of pride; and as time went on, the fixity of religious ceremonial became a corrupting force, which took away the vitality of the true spirit. This was what wrought the downfall of both the Babylonian and the Egyptian states (and of the Assyrian too, though that was less early in the field, and had less seminataive power); their external splendour proved to the detriment of their internal life. Polytheism, though an error, was an error that might in itself have been overcome; but when polytheism was enshrined in massive temples, made vivid to the imaginations of men by sculptured images, confirmed by powerful priesthoods and a stately ritual, and finally taken by despotic monarchs as one of the great supports of their monarchy, it became impossible for pure religion to vivify these immense bulwarks of established error. Decadence was inevitable for them; and by the year 500 before Christ both Babylon and Egypt had lost the living energy which had once been so strong in them; they were as salt that had lost its savour; they were trodden underfoot of men. Assyria had perished more utterly even than they, and a century earlier.

Yet for the sake of their ancient history, Babylonia and Egypt deserve to be remembered. The most ancient of all

countries that have any history whatever, we can hardly doubt that to them the art of writing was mainly due, though it may have been perfected by the Phœnicians ; and the invention of it is a title to honour which can never be effaced. They were consumed by the fierceness of their own energy ; whereas the milder flame of Chinese civilisation has subsisted up to the present day.

After all, Babylonia did not entirely succumb ; for from Babylonia came Abraham, the author of true monotheism in the world, as I shall endeavour to show when I come to the narrative of the real centre of the religious forces of the world. And though Moses, the great successor of Abraham, was not a product of Egypt, he was greatly helped by Egypt.

But before coming to this central religious history, it is desirable that a glance should be cast on those great countries which we call heathen, but which have been true lights to the world in their several capacities, and which have not lost their worth even at the present day. Of Babylonia and Egypt, interesting though they are, I need say no more ; but ancient India, ancient Persia, ancient China, ancient Greece and Rome, are still powers in the world ; the writings of their ancient representatives are of singular force and beauty ; their religious temper, though imperfect in various ways, is still capable of giving us instruction ; we must certainly not neglect them, though it was not by them that real penetration into the invisible sphere was accomplished.

Of the five countries just named, it will be best to begin with India ; for though Chinese history reaches farther back than Indian history (and probably too Chinese literature farther back than Indian literature), yet India and Persia can hardly be dissevered, and India and Persia together have connexions with Babylonia which it will be well not to ignore ; although India by itself might be considered as purely separate.

It is a remarkable fact, that our knowledge of the earliest history of India is obtained simply and solely by inference from the language in which the sacred books of the Hindus are written. That language is Sanskrit ; and Sanskrit is so nearly related, both to the language in which the sacred books of Persia are written, and also to Greek and Latin, as almost to compel us to assume a common ancestry for the nations who spoke those languages. We cannot indeed absolutely infer identity of race from similarity of language ; but the inference, where nothing exists to make it improbable, cannot be deprived of force. It



is probable, at all events, that some of the ancestors of the ancient Hindus lived side by side with some of the ancestors of the ancient Persians, Greeks, and Romans, in a common country ; and the tendency of recent inquiry has been (on what are called archæological grounds, that is, the actual remains of men and men's work found in the soil) to locate this country somewhere towards the north-west of Europe. Of the migrations which ensued from this beginning we know nothing whatever from any relic of ancient writing, hieroglyph, or sculpture ; that there were such migrations is the sum of our knowledge ; and this, on the whole, is due to philological science, and is its greatest triumph. Other languages, which it is not necessary here to name, belong to the same group as those just mentioned ; and the common race marked out by these kindred languages is called the Aryan race, or " the race of nobles," as they proudly termed themselves. The countries along which the current of the Aryan peoples swept were thus on the whole to the north of those in which the more stationary Semitic races (Babylonian<sup>1</sup>, Palestinian, Arabic) lived ; it was only in Persia and India that the Aryan races approached the tropical regions of the earth.

Not only is historical evidence (in the proper sense of that word) absent as regards the first beginnings of the Aryan Hindus ; it is also absent in a most singular degree from the entire literature of India for more than a thousand years after its first beginning. In ancient India we have the remarkable phenomenon of a race full of thought, feeling, and religious aspiration, a race, too, capable of framing a complex legal system, in which nevertheless the very conception of a historical narrative had not arisen. The Rig-Veda, the earliest of all Hindu compositions, is a collection of religious hymns ; the Atharva-Veda adds religious incantations and charms to the hymnology ; the Brâhmanas are a collection of ritualistic rules, interspersed with legends ; the Upanishads are an elaborate, though informal, philosophical scheme ; the Code of Manu is a legislative, but also a semi-religious work ; the Râmâyana and Mahâbhârata are epic poems, out of which grains of history may be gathered. But not one scrap of genuine historical writing is to be found in all that immense literature ; save in so far as oral traditions of the Buddhists, which no doubt have a historical

<sup>1</sup> The Babylonians were at first of the Sumerian race ; the Semitic race invaded the country afterwards ; and whatever the admixture of races, the Semitic language became dominant.

character, and which were first set down in writing in the second century before the Christian era, constitute an exception. But the Brahmanic or main current of Hindu literature is (up to the Christian era at all events) totally devoid of historical works ; and this resulted from various causes. In the first place, the art of writing was late in its introduction into India. "Before the first spreading of Buddhism in India," says Max Müller (*History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 507), "writing for literary purposes was absolutely unknown"; that is, it was absolutely unknown till the fifth century before Christ. The absolute first introduction of writing into India is however now put in the eighth century B.C. ; but even after the art of writing was known, the use of it was looked upon with the greatest suspicion by the Brahmins ; thus we read in the Mahâ-bhârata, "Those who sell the Vedas, *and even those who write them*, those also who defile them, they shall go to hell." (Max Müller, *op. cit.* p. 502).

Without the art of writing, history must always be of an imperfect character ; for the comparison of authorities is generally impossible unless those authorities have given their testimony in writing. But if we look further into the matter, we shall see that there was a yet deeper reason why the Hindu mind did not produce histories ; and this was because the Hindu mind acquired from a very early period an introspective bent, and while cultivating extraordinary subtlety in abstract spiritual inquiries, disregarded external research almost entirely. Thus it will be seen that the very absence of historical works in Hindu literature is eloquent as to the character of the people ; they were spiritually active and originative, outwardly passive and uninventive. It is indeed probable that the Hindu mind made one invention of real importance for the well-being of mankind, the invention of those figures which we call Arabic, which have been of such power in facilitating numerical calculations (taken in connexion with the *place-value* of figures in the decimal notation) ; but the invention is one which belongs to the least material and most abstract side of knowledge, and it does not belong to the period before the Christian era.

When then we try to discover what happened in the successive epochs of Indian history before the Christian era, our conclusions have in the main to be drawn from indirect sources. Philology is our first informant, geography our second ; for from the mention of rivers in the successive treatises above mentioned, we may trace the gradual progress of the Aryan race after it



crossed the northern mountain-barrier. First came the movement into the valleys of the Indus and its tributaries ; onwards then into the plains of the Ganges and the Jumna ; onwards again into yet further regions of the east and the south. Other inferences are to be drawn from the character and the subject matter of the treatises ; from the whole a brief but significant story may be evolved. The Aryans with whom the story is concerned were moulded by the conditions in which they found themselves into so different a likeness from the ancient Greeks and Romans, that we could hardly conceive the stock to be the same, had we not the languages to give evidence to it, and did we not know the gradual transformation of character which took place in those who migrated into the great southern peninsula.

The Aryan Hindus (and the word "Hindus" implies a home near the river Indus) must have been a nation of warriors in their first beginnings. This lay in the nature of the case ; for they were winning land for themselves ; not indeed in the tornado fashion of the Mongols in after ages, but slowly and surely, like the Saxons in our own country, when they beat back the Britons. The hymns of the Rig-Veda supply references to these wars of the Aryans with the ruder tribes whom they were supplanting ; but it must be noted that war, even at this early period, was not the topic which most animated the spirits of this conquering race. Religion was the theme of the earliest Hindu song ; religion, in one of its most natural forms, though not the deepest or truest ; the awe which man feels before the great powers of nature, the belief that behind each manifestation of these powers a personal spirit lies hidden, and the worship of these personal spirits. That is the main, though not the only, theme of the Rig-Veda ; and it is treated with a primitive simplicity unrivalled in any other literature<sup>1</sup>. Ancestor worship, so powerful in China, is here subordinate. It is the great dome of the sky ; the mighty sun, and all the power inherent in fire ; the storm-winds, and the beneficent rains ; the intoxicating Soma-plant ; these are the chief deities of the Aryan Hindus in their earliest known phase. But the stars are not greatly honoured ;

<sup>1</sup> "Vedic mythology," says Professor Macdonell, "occupies a very important position in the study of the history of religions. Its oldest source presents to us an earlier stage in the evolution of beliefs based on the personification and worship of natural phenomena, than any other literary monument of the world. To this oldest phase can be traced by uninterrupted development the germs of the religious beliefs of the great majority of the modern Indians, the only branch of the Indo-European race in which its original nature worship has not been entirely supplanted many centuries ago by a foreign monotheistic faith." *Vedic Mythology*, by A. A. Macdonell, p. 2.

they<sup>1</sup> "slink off like thieves" before the sun-god. They are not worshipped in their own nature at all, nor are they felt to have power over men; imagination had not yet invested them with artificial authority. Neither is the moon, or even the earth, greatly worshipped at present; yet the earth in some degree perhaps<sup>2</sup>; but nowise comparably to the sun, the storm-winds, or the rain. The most powerful natural forces were the chief objects of worship to the primitive Aryan Hindus; and for such a worship no very complex imagination was needed, in which respect this early religion differed very remarkably from the Hindu religion of later days. These natural forces were of course personified; the sun under the greatest variety of names, Savitri, Sûrya, Pûshan, Vishnu, &c.; the heaven in all its complex character is Varuna, to whom also moral attributes belong more fully and specifically than to any other deity<sup>3</sup>; with Varuna is associated Mitra, the deity of the solar light; Agni is the god of fire; Indra governs the lower sky, with its clouds and fostering rains; the Maruts are the storm-winds.

A simple-minded race were they to whom the religion just described was acceptable. It might seem that they hardly needed a formal priestly class; yet a formal priestly class did arise among them; and then by slow degrees a formal partition of society into ranks, whereby the whole mind and character of this part of the Aryan race underwent a complete metamorphosis. They who had been mere warriors became at length a nation in which thought, not action, was predominant, and thought the most subtle, mingled with imaginations the most fantastic, to be found in any community under the sun.

It happened somewhat in this way. The further the Aryan race penetrated into India, the less able were they entirely to drive out or abolish the dark-skinned races which had occupied the land before them. (Some of these races, especially the Dravidian, were of a high type and far from wanting in intellectual power.) Thus then the fair-skinned Aryans were compelled to settle down side by side with the dark races; it is true, those dark-skinned races were their inferiors, and were generally enslaved by them, but hardly ever exterminated. In the desire of the Aryans to keep their own higher type uncontaminated the institution of caste began. (Significant of this origin is the

<sup>1</sup> See the passage quoted by Monier Williams on the 19th page of his *Indian Wisdom*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Indian Wisdom*, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> See Macdonell's *Vedic Mythology*, p. 26.



fact that the word for caste in the Laws of Manu is *varna*, colour.) But meanwhile other causes had tended to deepen the distinction between the different classes of the Aryans themselves. In their original habitation we may infer that priest and warrior and husbandman had grown to be more or less distinct, since we find such a distinction prevailing among their kindred the Persians (including in the term "Persians" all the inhabitants of the country between the borders of India and the rivers Tigris and Euphrates). But in India the distinction had been deepened. How this happened, is matter of conjecture; but we may well conceive that the hot climate of India slackened the energy of the fighting class, and gave an introspective bias to the meditations of the ministers of religion; so that the dignity of the priests was raised and their peculiar character was emphasised; while at the same time the warriors, though less warlike, would not be less typically warriors than they had been before. At all events at the close of the Rig-Veda period (possibly 800 B.C., but dates are most uncertain elements in Indian history) we find the four castes clearly named, and the Brahmin or priestly caste at the head of them; though how strict the separation was in those days between priest, warrior, and husbandman, it is impossible for us to say. The passage in the Rig-Veda here referred to is in the 90th hymn of the tenth Mandala; in which, after describing mythically how the first man was divided by the Gods into four parts, the poet says:

The Brahmin was his mouth, the kingly soldier was made his arms, the husbandman his thighs, the servile Sûdra issued from his feet. *Indian Wisdom*, p. 25.

It is clear that the fourth caste, the "Servile Sûdra," is greatly inferior to the other three; and we must conclude (as was said above) that this was a result of the Sûdras being a conquered race.

But what were the means by which the Brahmins attained their superiority over the warrior caste, the Kshatriyas (to use the Hindu term)? Partly no doubt it was from the cause already indicated, the greater tendency towards internal meditation and the corresponding diminution of external action; but another cause, and one unfortunately detrimental to the well-being of the entire people, lay in the excessive multiplication of religious performances, charms, rites, and ceremonies, in the interest of the Brahmin or priestly class. Good and evil were commingled in the Hindu religion, as in all other religions,

and in all the affairs of men ; and in the present instance both the good and the evil tended to the exaltation of the priestly class. On the side of good must be mentioned the spiritual fervour of the Brahmins ; their gradual approximation to the doctrine of a single divine power immanent in the universe ; their ethical doctrine that self-denial was the right way of life. They erred however in that they did not think of divine love as the power capable of saving men ; and prayer and self-denial were more and more conceived as agencies producing their result by a sort of mechanical compulsion. The gods themselves were believed to pray, and to win power by praying, as by a sort of compulsory charm ; and since the original meaning of "brahma" is "prayer," the highest god (named in early days Prajâpati) was in the end named Brahmâ, or in other words prayer itself was sublimated into a deity. To this mixture of good and evil on the side of doctrine corresponded a good and an evil on the side of practice. Refinement increased, and tempers grew milder ; but the Brahmin also grew more greedy of the gain which the sacrifices brought him, and the Kshatriya dared not lessen his sacrificial duties by one jot or one tittle. From the Rig-Veda indeed one could not have inferred this ; but the Atharva-Veda with its abundance of magical rites is clearly indicative of it, and in the Brâhmanas it stares one in the face. "Like sacrifice to the gods are the fees paid to the human gods the priests"—so says the Satapatha Brâhmana<sup>1</sup> ; and the complexity of gods and of sacrifices grew continually greater. Strange it is to reflect that while the subtle reasoning of Hindu theologians was continually drawing them nearer to the truth of the essential unity of the Deity (a doctrine embraced by them first as theism, afterwards as pantheism), the practice of the priests continually drew them more and more in the direction of a fantastic polytheism ; but the causes of both tendencies are sufficiently apparent, and subtle intellects rarely find it difficult to reconcile the irreconcilable. Thus it was that the Brahmins in the end overmastered the warrior caste, and made themselves the real rulers of Aryan India. We need not suppose, nor is it at all probable, that they won their predominance by material fighting ; though statements implying this appear in the great epics, which are comparatively late.

Meanwhile the Aryan conquerors had been spreading from west to east, till they were in touch with the Bay of Bengal ; but

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Dr Hopkins in *The Religions of India*, p. 179.



it would hardly seem that they had penetrated south of the Vindhya hills, or in other words into the true peninsular part of India, when the real philosophy of the Hindu religion received clear form in the Upanishads. As the Rig-Veda represents the primary natural religion of the Aryan Hindus ; as the Atharva-Veda represents this religion obscured by their first natural superstition ; as the Brâhmanas represent their complex ceremonial organisation ; so the Upanishads represent the culmination of their philosophy. It would appear at first sight as if these four branches of thought and practice might have arisen at the same time, for the parts of human nature to which they appeal are different and are all real ; but as a matter of fact their contents show that they arose on the whole in the order just named ; though there was a good deal of overlapping, and no actual date must be pressed. Speaking loosely, we may say that this whole range of literature occupied the best part of a thousand years in its production, from 1500 B.C. to 500 B.C., and that the close of the Upanishads coincides very nearly with the rise of Buddhism. And as the literature here mentioned (together with the Laws of Manu) constitutes the most important part of the pre-Christian Hindu literature (not including the writings of the Buddhists under that appellation), it will be well if I illustrate by a few quotations the progress of the highest thought and feeling as shown in these works. Pure Theism is expressed in one of the hymns of the Rig-Veda ; a late hymn, possibly, as compared with the rest of that collection ; but still very early. I quote the translation of part of it given in Max Müller's *Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (p. 569) :

In the beginning there arose the Source of golden light—He was the only born Lord of all that is. He stablished the earth, and this sky ;—Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice ?

He who gives life, He who gives strength ; whose blessing all the bright Gods desire ; whose shadow is immortality ; whose shadow is death ; Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice ?

He who through his power is the only King of the breathing and awakening world ; He who governs all, man and beast ; Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice ?

He whose power these snowy mountains, whose power the sea proclaims, with the distant river ; He whose these regions are, as it were his two arms ; Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice ?

Five stanzas more are in the same vein ; and then comes a tenth stanza, in which it is affirmed that Prajâpati (i.e. the Lord of all creatures) is the God to whom sacrifices must be

offered, and from whom we ask wealth. This last stanza is often thought to be a later addition. It is a question of feeling more than of evidence; something might perhaps be said for its genuineness<sup>1</sup>. Prajâpati, though the oldest name for the Supreme Being, is probably not so old as some names of the more special deities. In this poem Hindu Theism reaches its high-water mark; pantheism is not hinted at in it, and polytheism is quite in the background; the one Creator occupies the whole soul of the poet.

For a moment then, the religious consciousness of India rested in that belief which is the foundation of all true religion, the belief in a Creative Spirit from whom all that exists has received its life and being, by whom all that exists is guided and governed. Such a belief naturally leads to action, and receives its interpretation through action; but if action be relaxed, the belief in God sinks into that passive contemplation of divine motions pervading the universe which is known as the belief in pantheism. Action did become relaxed among the Hindus, as in the intense heat of that climate was not unnatural; pantheistic belief followed, and appeared the highest attainment of human reason; and while among the multitude this lofty contemplation was impossible, the multitude were incapable of rising to true belief in God, and sank again into that polytheism which imaginative but unreasoning minds so naturally embrace. It was not quite the same as the primitive nature worship; but it was no advance on that ancient view.

At the very end of the Rig-Veda pantheism appears. Perhaps most distinctly in the hymn which is numbered as *Mandala*, x. 90, and which is called the Purusha-sûkta; but the remarkable hymn in which the creation of the world is described (*Mandala*, x. 129) gives more idea of that speculative process which has so much natural affinity with pantheistic belief, and which stands so very far apart from the practical conduct of life. Let the reader bear in mind the first chapter of Genesis, and mark the contrast with the hymn now to be quoted, which deals with precisely the same subject<sup>2</sup>:

In the beginning there was neither nought nor aught,  
Then there was neither sky nor atmosphere above.  
What then enshrouded all this teeming universe?  
In the receptacle of what was it contained?

<sup>1</sup> Professor Macdonell assumes it to be genuine (*Vedic Mythology*, p. 119).

<sup>2</sup> I quote it from the *Indian Wisdom* of Monier Williams, p. 22.



Was it enveloped in the gulf profound of water ?  
 Then there was neither death nor immortality,  
 Then there was neither day, nor night, nor light, nor darkness,  
 Only the Existent One breathed calmly, self-contained.  
 Nought else than him there was ; nought else above, beyond.  
 Then first came darkness hid in darkness, gloom in gloom.  
 Next all was water, all a chaos indiscreet,  
 In which the One lay void, shrouded in nothingness.  
 Then turning inwards he by self-developed force  
 Of inner fervour and intense abstraction, grew.  
 And now in him Desire, the primal germ of mind,  
 Arose, which learned men, profoundly searching, say  
 Is the first subtle bond, connecting Entity  
 With nullity. This ray that kindled dormant life,  
 Where was it then ? before ? or was it found above ?  
 Were there parturient powers and latent qualities,  
 And fecund principles beneath, and active forces  
 That energized aloft ? Who knows ? Who can declare ?  
 How and from what has sprung this Universe ? the gods  
 Themselves are subsequent to its development.  
 Who, then, can penetrate the secret of its rise ?  
 Whether 'twas framed or not, made or not made ; he only  
 Who in the highest heaven sits, the omniscient lord  
 Assuredly knows all, or haply knows he not.

Profound meditation there is in that passage, a profound sense of mystery ; but there is not the feeling of awe before a Creative Power greater than oneself. In the book of Genesis the reverse is the case ; the writer of Genesis is full of awe before God ; but the mystery of Creation is not dwelt upon ; his mood is affirmative, not meditative. With all the inaccuracies in detail of the first chapter of Genesis (inaccuracies hardly to be avoided when that book was written) the writer has firm hold in his feelings of where the creative power lies ; it lies in God ; after that has been acknowledged, all other feeling is swallowed up in trust and awe. But the Hindu philosopher has no sense of the value of trust ; he does not know how intimately trust is connected with all fruitful action ; and the chief reason of his ignorance is because he has come to undervalue action ; for it is in action that trust becomes necessary. The Hindu philosopher throws all his force into meditation : yet he is in presence of a problem not to be solved by meditation. All he can do is to make us feel that we are looking into a profound depth, in which there is but a spark or two on which our vision can rest determinately. The feeling produced is impressive, but there is little fruitfulness in the method ; it has but superficial effect in framing society.

Thus, then, at the time when the first period of Hindu thought

and action was closing, the period signalised by those lyrical hymns called the Rig-Veda, a habit of life had been entered upon, in which action was too little prominent, thought too much. Yet in some form or other action must take place ; and this was exactly the opportunity for priests to enter in with ritual and services, sacrifices and forms of expiation. This ceremonial religion is the main theme of the collection called the Brâhmanas ; but earlier than the Brâhmanas is the collection called the Atharva-Veda, in which charms and incantations are predominant, a practice of the least commendable kind. In short, the warrior race which had entered India from the north-west centuries before, and was then full of forward-pushing energy, had now lost its old temper, and had taken instead a mood of mystical acquiescence, and of subservience to occult powers. It is significant that at the same time idols begin to appear in religious worship. Possibly even the Rig-Veda, in one passage, mentions an idol ; at least this is the natural interpretation of the following words :

Who will buy this my Indra for ten cows ? When he has slain his foes he may give him back to me<sup>1</sup>.

The Brâhmanas again, in their later parts, recognise idols. Thus the polytheism of the lower classes among the Hindus was not tending to better things ; it was on that downward course, which ultimately produced the worship of Siva or Seeva (whom English readers of Southey's *Kehama* will well remember) ; from which source fear was engendered, affecting all the thoughts of men respecting supernatural things.

But the higher members of the race were not decadent. The worship of Siva does not enter into the Upanishads. That great treatise, or series of treatises, exhibits the highest effort of the Hindu mind to define the relation between man and the Infinite Creative Power from whom man has derived his being, and under whose superintendence the universe lies. The Upanishads take up the question which the Rig-Veda in its closing hymns had propounded, and endeavour to give this question a full answer. The answer thus given is the product of deep meditation and labour ; it merits the attention of philosophers ; but it is involved in this radical weakness, that it assumes intellectual thought, and not love and trust, to be the final revealer of the spiritual unity of all things. The result of this was that conduct, or the ordinary action of men in the world, was undervalued ; it would

<sup>1</sup> *Rig-Veda*, iv. 24. 10. I take the quotation from Macdonell's *Vedic Mythology*, p. 155, as also the statement about the Brâhmanas.



not be correct to say that conduct is ignored by Hindu thinkers, but the place which it holds is subordinate. In all this the contrast between the Hindu mind and the Israelite mind (which was engaged about the same time in the attempt to solve the same question) is most striking.

A few passages from the Upanishads will illustrate in a more precise manner the teaching briefly characterised in the above sentences. The first passage that I will quote is a command to believe, and a command what to believe.

Man is a creature of will. According to what his will is in this world, so will he be when he has departed this life. Let him therefore have this will and belief : The intelligent, whose body is spirit, whose form is light, whose thoughts are true, whose nature is like ether (omnipresent and invisible), from whom all works, all desires, all sweet odours and tastes proceed ; he who embraces all this, who never speaks, and is never surprised, he is myself within the heart, smaller than a corn of rice, smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a canary seed or the kernel of a canary seed. He also is myself within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds. He from whom all works, all desires, all sweet odours and tastes proceed, who embraces all this, who never speaks and who is never surprised, he, my self within the heart, is that Brahman. When I shall have departed from hence, I shall obtain him (that Self). He who has this faith has no doubt ; thus said Sandilya, yea, thus he said. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. I. p. 48.

“Brahman” and “Self” have the same meaning in the above passage, and both are identified with Absolute Being ; we might almost sum up the meaning of the passage thus : “The Absolute exists in man.” But the Hindu philosopher is aware that man in his present state does not realise the existence in himself, in his own sensuous nature, of the Absolute ; man has to be taught to realise it ; and the following passage gives some idea of the manner in which the instruction is to be conveyed ; it is a dialogue between an instructor and his pupil :

“When one attends on a tutor (spiritual guide), then one believes. One who does not attend on a tutor, does not believe. Only he who attends, believes. This attention on a tutor, however, we must desire to understand.”

“Sir, I desire to understand it.”

“When one performs all sacred duties” [the duties of a student, such as restraint of the senses, concentration of the mind, &c.—so Max Müller explains the words of the original] “then one attends really on a tutor. One who does not perform his duties, does not really attend on a tutor. Only he who performs his duties, attends on his tutor. This performance of duties, however, we must desire to understand.”

“Sir, I desire to understand it.”

"When one obtains bliss (in oneself) then one performs duties. One who does not obtain bliss, does not perform duties. Only he who obtains bliss, performs duties. This bliss, however, we must desire to understand."

"Sir, I desire to understand it."

"The Infinite is bliss. There is no bliss in anything finite. Infinity only is bliss. This Infinity, however, we must desire to understand."

"Sir, I desire to understand it."

"When one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else, that is the Infinite. When one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else, that is the finite. The Infinite is immortal, the finite is mortal."

"Sir, in what does the Infinite rest ?"

"In its own greatness, or not even in greatness. In the world they call cows and horses, elephants and gold, slaves, wives, fields and houses, greatness. I do not mean this....The Infinite indeed is below, above, behind, before, right and left—it is indeed all this. Now follows the explanation of the Infinite as the I: I am below, I am above, I am behind, before, right and left—I am all this. Next follows the explanation of the Infinite as the Self: Self is below, above, behind, before, right and left—Self is all this. He who sees, perceives, and understands this, loves the Self, delights in the Self, revels in the Self, rejoices in the Self—he becomes a Svarāj (an autocrat or selfruler); he is lord and master in all the worlds. But those who think differently from this, live in perishable worlds, and have other beings for their rulers." *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. I. pp. 122–124.

An intelligent reader of the above passage must be divided between admiration of the wonderful subtlety of it, and a sense that the subtlety is wrongly directed. It will be observed that in the whole passage not only is no harmony obtained between man in his moods of desire and labour, patience and courage, as shown in ordinary life, and the thinker who transcends ordinary life for the sake of divine hopes and divine experiences; but such harmony is from the outset regarded as impossible. The thinker is represented as deserting the finite in order to obtain the infinite. Cows and horses belong to the finite, my true self belongs to the infinite; the absolutely right course is for me to desert my cows and horses and attend solely to my true self. Yes, and the absolutely right course will be for me to desert my wife too; so did the great Hindu sage Yājñavalkya, whose affection for his wife Maitreyī could not for a moment be doubted. He told her, before he left her for ever, that the cause of his love for her lay in his love for the greater or Absolute Self; therefore he must follow that love which was causative of all other love.

Now it is true that some Christian mystics have said words and done deeds not quite dissimilar to those of Yājñavalkya, and that even some words of Jesus Christ himself might appear



to set the finite and the infinite at variance with one another and to recommend the desertion of all things belonging to this world for the sake of a mystical union with the Divine Being. But this is not the real teaching of Jesus Christ, when all his sayings are considered. The main current of Biblical teaching, most undoubted in the Old Testament, and really adhered to in the New, in spite of some difficulties occasioned by the contemplation of eternal life, is to represent the finite as sustained by the Infinite, fed from the Infinite, tending towards the Infinite; not as being in opposition to the Infinite. In that petition of the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," it is assumed that our ordinary earthly life may present the pattern of the divine life; there is no abandonment of our ordinary life assumed or recommended. One must not deny that there has been an element in the Christian belief and practice of the past which may fairly be put as parallel with the doctrine of the Upanishads, and with the practice which resulted from that doctrine among the Hindus; but it has not been the leading, central, and finally dominant doctrine and practice of Christians<sup>1</sup>.

Nor, it is fair to say, are the Upanishads on their side devoid of passages which mitigate the extreme doctrine of deserting the finite in order to be absorbed into the infinite. But their extreme doctrine has been followed among Hindus for a length of time and with a severity of practice beyond any parallel that could be adduced from the history of Christianity. With what severity it has been followed will be seen by the extracts that I will now quote from Monier Williams :

The aim of the Yoga is to teach the means by which the human soul may attain complete union with the supreme Soul. This fusion or union of individual with universal spirit may be effected even in the body....

In the *Sakuntalâ* (act vii. verse 175) there is a description of an ascetic engaged in Yoga, whose condition of fixed trance and immovable impassiveness has lasted so long that ants had thrown up a mound as high as his waist without being disturbed, and birds had built their nests in the long clotted tresses of his tangled hair. This may be thought a mere flight of poetical fancy, but a Mohammedan traveller, whose narrative is quoted by Mr Mill (*British India*, i. 355) once actually saw a man in India standing motionless with his face turned towards the sun. The same traveller, having occasion to revisit the same spot sixteen years afterwards, found the very same man in the very same attitude. Such men have been known to fix their gaze on the sun's disk till sight has

<sup>1</sup> The question whether the New Testament commands or favours asceticism is of course different from the question whether Christians in any age have actually been ascetics. The former is the more important question; but I must not say more on the point here.

been extinguished. This is paralleled by a particular form of austerity described in *Manu*, vi. 23, where mention is made of the Pañca-tapâs, a Yogî who during the three hottest months (April, May and June), sits between four blazing fires placed towards the four quarters, with the burning sun above his head to form a fifth. In fact, a Yogî was actually seen not long ago (Mill's *India*, i. 353) seated between four such fires on a quadrangular stage. He stood on one leg gazing at the sun while these fires were lighted at the four corners. Then placing himself upright on his head, with his feet elevated in the air, he remained for three hours in that position. He then seated himself cross-legged and continued bearing the raging heat of the sun above his head and the fires which surrounded him till the end of the day, occasionally adding combustibles with his own hands to increase the flames. *Indian Wisdom*, pp. 102, 104-5.

I do not think that any one, who compares the actual practice of the Yogîs as here described with the precepts laid down in the dialogue quoted from the Upanishads, will doubt that there is some real causative connexion between the precepts and the practice. It is true that the Yogîs, over and above their desire of being united with the Divine Being, had also a belief that the pain of their asceticism deserved and would receive a reward hereafter; but the Upanishads teach the value of penance (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xv. pp. 64-66) and the reward of good works, so that on this side also precept and practice are connected. Yet we cannot but ask the question: Would the authors of the Upanishads have approved of the practice of the Yogîs? We can hardly think so. Though their teaching led in that direction, yet all teaching ought to be received with intelligence (*cum grano salis*) sufficiently to prevent the acceptance of preposterous conclusions which appear to be logical. There is in the Upanishads human feeling, much recognition of the value of affection, even some recognition of the love of God as a motive. When, in the Katha-Upanishad, Nakiketas has been devoted to death by his angry father, he goes to the house of Yama or Death, and never thinks of asking for his own life, but the first gift he asks for is that his father may be free from anger towards him. Again, for a milder exposition of philosophical doctrine than that contained in the dialogue between teacher and pupil above quoted, take the following:

That (the Brahman) is the true Brahma-city, (not the body). In it all desires are contained. It is the Self, free from sin, free from old age, from death and grief, from hunger and thirst, which desires nothing but what it ought to desire, and imagines nothing but what it ought to imagine. . . . Those who depart from hence, after having discovered the Self and those true desires, for them there is freedom in all the worlds. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. i. pp. 126-7.



Here, it will be seen, honourable desires are recognised ; and there is a domestic touch in the following passage, descriptive of a good man, from the close of the Khândogya Upanishad :

He who has learned the Veda from a family of teachers, according to the sacred rule, in the leisure times left from the duties to be performed for the Guru (the preceptor), who, after receiving his discharge, has settled in his own house, keeping up the memory of what he has learned by repeating it regularly in some sacred spot, who has begotten virtuous sons, and concentrated all his senses on the Self, never giving pain to any creature except at the tirthas (sacrifices, &c.), he who behaves thus all his life, reaches the world of Brahman, and does not return, yea, he does not return. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. I. p. 144.

It must be observed, in reference to this last phrase, " he does not return," that the Upanishads clearly recognise the transmigration of souls ; and they are the first of the great Hindu treatises which do recognise this doctrine. The transmigration of souls fits very well into a system which makes absorption into the Infinite the final crown of man's being ; for many men are obviously not fitted to obtain the final reward of virtue, and for them a fresh period of probation is readily conceivable. At the same time the Hindu imagination provided very serious hells (or possibly they should be called purgatories) between the successive lives of transmigrating souls, where distinct punishment has been deserved.

With all the defects of the Hindu religion, a conscientious struggle was involved in it. Were I to proceed further on the religious line, Buddhism would be the next topic ; but that great religion must be left for another chapter. Meanwhile, religion is not the whole of life, however closely it may be intertwined with life ; what progress then were the Hindus making in secular matters ? Life goes on, whether men be religious or irreligious ; whether their religion be sound and true, or a superstition. The religion of the Hindus having been such as is here described, what was the ordinary life of the Hindus like ? They had begun as a clan of invading warriors ; one may conceive what their life was like in those aggressive days ; but when they had settled down, and were lords of the aboriginal tribes, what was life like in this new state, among the lords themselves, their vassals, and their slaves ? Not a very happy life, it is certain. The hot sun had sucked out their energy ; nature was large and abundant around them, it is true, but nature teemed with hostilities ; and worse than wild beasts or serpents was the danger of disease and famine. Men may contend against, may conquer, physical

difficulties ; but for this a store of native strength is needed, and a strength that shows itself in organisation ; whereas the crude simplicity of the organisation which prevailed among the Hindus is in itself a token of their inability to become the masters of nature. That organisation was the caste system ; of which, indeed, I have already spoken ; but it has been too important, too long enduring an institution not to demand some account, not only how it came to be what it is, but also how it acted, for good or for harm.

We must not think it altogether, and in every respect, an evil. The caste system sprang from natural causes, from motives which were sincerely felt ; the distinctions of value on which it was based were to a certain extent true ; and though it stood greatly in the way of advance in good, it had a certain preservative power against the forces of disorder which are latent in all human society. If under it the people of India could not rise, it helped them at any rate not to sink utterly. The instinct of self-preservation—a too timid but not quite contemptible instinct—created the castes ; the opening words of the following extract from that ancient work, the *Laws of Manu* (I. 87–91) are the practical acknowledgement of this :

*In order to protect this universe* He, the most resplendent one (i.e. the Creator) assigned separate duties and occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet. To Brāhmanas he assigned teaching and studying the Veda, sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting of alms. The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study the Veda, and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures ; the Vaisya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study the Veda, to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land. One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sūdra, to serve meekly even these other three castes. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxv. p. 24.

Such is the authoritative description of the most durable and rigid division that ever existed between the classes of a single people ; for the division, while inexorably perpetuating itself, did nevertheless assume, at all events when the Laws of Manu were written, that the people was one. Beginning, it would seem, while some difference of hue still existed between rulers and ruled, it lasted after this had died away.

On this foundation of caste Hindu legislation is built up. The Laws of Manu do not absolutely forbid intermarriage between different castes ; and it might be thought that, intermarriage



once being allowed, the whole system would break down ; but great care is taken that this shall not happen. The rules are given in the *Laws of Manu* (III. 4. 12-15) :

Having bathed, with the permission of his teacher, and performed according to the rule the Samâvartana (the rite on returning home) a twice-born man shall marry a wife of equal caste who is endowed with auspicious bodily marks....For the first marriage of twice-born men wives of equal caste are recommended ; but for those who through desire proceed to marry again, the following females, chosen according to the direct order of the castes, are most approved. It is declared that a Sûdra woman alone can be the wife of a Sûdra, she and one of his own caste the wives of a Vaisya, those two and one of his own caste the wives of a Kshatriya, those three and one of his own caste the wives of a Brâhmana. A Sûdra woman is not mentioned even in any ancient story as the first wife of a Brâhmana or of a Kshatriya, though they lived in the greatest distress. Twice-born men who, in their folly, wed wives of the low Sûdra caste, soon degrade their families and their children to the state of Sûdras. *Ibid.* vol. xxv. pp. 75, 77, 78.

The expression " twice-born men " in the above passage needs explanation ; it means all belonging to the three upper castes. To use another phrase, these are the " initiated " ones ; the initiation being the second birth, outwardly manifested by the tying of the sacred girdle about the loins, after instruction in the Vedas. It will be seen that intermixture of castes through marriage is not an impossibility ; and in the tenth book of the *Laws of Manu* names are given to the progeny of male and female differing in caste ; but it is not necessary to enter upon these details here.

On the whole, the permanence of the caste system was insured ; the guarantee of it lay partly in the conservative disposition of the Hindus, partly in the natural power of an aristocratic government—the most stable, where it has really entered into possession, of all governments.

Beyond all the other aristocratic tendencies of the caste system was its exaltation of the highest caste, the Brahmins (or Brâhmanas). Kings were by virtue of their office of the second caste, the Kshatriyas<sup>1</sup> ; and how greatly a Brahmin surpassed a king in dignity will be seen by the following extract from the *Laws* (VIII. 37, 38) :

When a learned Brâhmana has found treasure, deposited in former times, he may take even the whole of it ; for he is master of everything. When the king finds treasure of old concealed in the ground, let him give one half to Brâhmanas and place the other half in his treasury. *Ibid.* vol. xxv. p. 259.

<sup>1</sup> This is declared at the beginning of the seventh book of the *Laws of Manu*.

Again, while corporal punishment may be inflicted on the other three castes, a Brahmin is never on any account whatever to be subjected to it (*Laws*, VIII. 124, 125). Nor may a Brahmin be put to death; for we read (*Laws*, VIII. 380, 381):

Let him (the king) never slay a Brâhmana, though he have committed all possible crimes; let him banish such an offender, leaving all his property to him and his body unhurt. No greater crime is known on earth than slaying a Brâhmana; a king, therefore, must not even conceive in his mind the thought of killing a Brâhmana.

The Laws of Manu, it will be seen, are very decidedly respecters of persons, and are quite without shame in being so. Very rarely, and under special circumstances, the caste distinction may be mitigated, as in the following passage:

He who possesses faith may receive pure learning even from a man of lower caste, the highest law even from the lowest....It is prescribed that in times of distress a student may learn the Veda from one who is not a Brâhmana; and that he shall walk behind and serve such a teacher, as long as the instruction lasts. *Laws*, II. 238-241.

The king (in spite of his being only of the second caste, a Kshatriya) is declared in the *Laws* (VII. 8) to be "a great deity in human form," and the rightful inflicter of punishment; only he must "daily worship aged Brâhmanas who know the Veda and are pure," and also, "though he may already be modest, constantly learn modesty from them" (VII. 38, 39).

The unequal measure of justice meted out to the respective castes is undoubtedly the most radical fault in Indian law and Indian feeling, but it is not the only fault. What, for instance, is to be said of the following injunctions?

Whenever the death of a Sûdra, of a Vaisya, of a Kshatriya, or of a Brâhmana would be caused by a declaration of the truth, a falsehood may be spoken; for such falsehood is preferable to the truth. Such witnesses must offer to Sarasvatî oblations of boiled rice which are sacred to the goddess of speech, thus performing the best penance in order to expiate the guilt of their falsehood. *Ibid.* VIII. 104, 105.

One cannot but ask, whether such a permission, or rather command, to give utterance to a falsehood confessedly of a guilty character, and to atone for it by a sacrificial offering, must not have acted injuriously on the moral rectitude of those who have accepted the Laws of Manu as a divine code; though, no doubt, the general teaching of those laws is strong in the inculcation of truthfulness.

As regards cruelty, we must not expect the legislator to have



been beyond his age ; and cruelty was hardly reckoned as intrinsically a sin in those times. Enactments prescribing mutilation of limbs or tongue, or cruel burnings, cannot but offend us, but too great censure ought not to be bestowed on those who ordained such punishments. More directly responsible was the Hindu legislator for his law of penances ; of these it will be enough to say that some are childish and some disgusting ; and though “to take pleasure in doing good to cows and Brâhmanas” (*Laws*, XI. 79) is a form of penance not exactly to be called either childish or disgusting, one could have wished that some recognition had been given to the value of doing good, when the objects of it were fellow men less exalted than Brâhmanas ; must one add, than cows ?

It is but moderate merit that can be allowed to the Laws of Manu, regarded as legislation ; but when regarded as counselling rather than commanding, as persuading to sentiment rather than enforcing action, we may have some esteem for them, in spite of their defects. Before however coming to this side of Hindu law, it may be well to give an example of real legislation in them, in a matter in which caste feeling has no place. Here is the rule for the determination of a disputed boundary (VIII. 245-254) :

If a dispute has arisen between two villages concerning a boundary, the king shall settle the limits in the month of Gyaistha (late May and early June), when the landmarks are most distinctly visible. Let him mark the boundaries by trees, (e.g.) Nyagrodhas, Asvatthas, Kimsukas, Cotton-trees, Sâlas, Palmyra palms, and trees with milky juice, by clustering shrubs, bamboos of different kinds, Samis, creepers, and raised mounds, reeds, thickets of Kubgaka ; thus the boundary will not be forgotten. Tanks, wells, cisterns, and fountains should be built where boundaries meet, as well as temples ; and as he will see that through men's ignorance of the boundaries trespasses constantly occur in the world, let him cause to be made other hidden marks for boundaries, stones, bones, cow's hair, chaff, ashes, potsherds, dry cowdung, bricks, cinders, pebbles, and sand, and whatsoever other similar things the earth does not corrode even after a long time, those he should cause to be buried where one boundary joins the other. By these signs, by long continued possession, and by constantly flowing streams of water, the king shall ascertain the boundary of the land of two disputing parties. If there be a doubt even on inspection of the marks, the settlement of a dispute regarding boundaries shall depend on witnesses. The witnesses, giving evidence regarding a boundary, shall be examined concerning the landmarks in the presence of the crowd of the villagers, and also of the two litigants. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxv. pp. 298, 299.

That is real legislation, and on a point of some importance. It will be seen that the land is communal, each village having

its own portion : the “litigants” mentioned at the end are merely the champions of the two villages between which the dispute lies. By the “king” is meant, no doubt, the great noble, or lord of the manor, who is supreme in that part of the country.

The following passage on the duties of a Vaisya or husbandman (the third caste, reckoned as “twice-born” along with the two upper castes) is partly legislation, partly advice and counsel :

After a Vaisya has received the sacraments and has taken a wife, he shall be always attentive to the business whereby he may subsist and to that of trading cattle....A Vaisya must never conceive this wish, “I will not keep cattle”; and if a Vaisya is willing to keep them, they must never be kept by men of other castes. A Vaisya must know the respective value of gems, of pearls, of coral, of metals, of cloth made of thread, of perfumes, of condiments. He must be acquainted with the manner of sowing of seeds, and with the good and bad qualities of fields, and he must perfectly know all measures and weights. Moreover, the excellence and defects of commodities, the advantages and disadvantages of different countries, the probable profit and loss on merchandise, and the means of properly rearing cattle. He must be acquainted with the proper wages of servants, with the various languages of men, with the manner of keeping goods, and the rules of purchase and sale. Let him exert himself to the utmost to increase his property in a righteous manner, and let him zealously give food to all created beings. *Laws*, ix. 326, 327-333.

The practical instinct in the above passage will be felt. A few more distinctly ethical passages may be quoted. On the duty of forgiveness :

A king who desires his own welfare, must always forgive litigants, infants, aged and sick men, who inveigh against him. *Ibid.* viii. 312.

Women receive just appreciation in the following maxim :

Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased ; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards. *Ibid.* iii. 56.

Nor less in the following :

He only is a perfect man who consists of three persons united, his wife, himself, and his offspring ; thus says the Veda, and learned Brāhmanas propound this maxim likewise. “The husband is declared to be one with the wife.” *Ibid.* ix. 45.

One cannot deny that polygamy must have stood considerably in the way of this last maxim ; but the intention, amid all practical defects, must be honoured.

Whatever we may think of asceticism, the following instructions to an ascetic may meet our approval :

Let him patiently bear hard words, let him not insult anybody, and let him not become anybody’s enemy for the sake of this perishable body.



Against an angry man let him not in return show anger, let him bless when he is cursed, and let him not utter speech devoid of truth. *Ibid.* VI. 47, 48.

The following maxim declares the supremacy and importance of conscience :

The Soul itself is the witness of the Soul, and the Soul is the refuge of the Soul ; despise not thy own soul, the supreme witness of men. *Ibid.* VIII. 84.

Such maxims, though embedded in the midst of much inferior matter, do in themselves reach a singular height of excellence. From Indian history it is not possible to illustrate them, for Indian history was not only unwritten, but even the conception of a historical record had not been reached in India in the times of which I have been speaking ; and even if we had historical records, the real morality of a people is one of the last things that is illustrated in formal histories. It is one of the virtues of poetry that it brings out the sentiments and character of a nation in a degree which historians find it difficult to rival ; and the two vast epics of ancient India, the Mahâ-bhârata and the Râmâyana, while of hardly any value as narratives of material fact, have, amid the wildness of their contents, something of the human touch. Those who wish to see this exemplified in brief space, may look to the *Indian Wisdom* of Monier Williams, and read, from the Râmâyana, the affecting story of the accidental death of the hermit's son through the arrow of king Dasaratha ; and from the Mahâ-bhârata, the tale of Satyavan and his wife Savitri. The Mahâ-bhârata contains that wonderful song, the Bhagavad-gîtâ, which will be found translated in the eighth volume of the *Sacred Books of the East* ; a song in which pantheistic theory is mingled with ardent devotion to the Deity, even to the incarnate Deity (for as such Krishna, who speaks the divine word, is brought before us) ; a song in which all passion and all desire are represented as shrivelling up before the imperious claim of duty ; and this claim has its example in the great warrior Arjuna, who trembles and shrinks, not with cowardly reluctance, before the thought of killing his own kinsmen ranged against him in the field of battle, and is told that such reluctance is a sin. The Bhagavad-gîtâ is probably the work in which the original Hindu religion reaches the highest point ; concerning the date of it very various opinions have been held. On this point I have no claim to an opinion ; but Mr Telang (the translator of the Bhagavad-gîtâ in the *Sacred Books of the East*,

and himself a Hindu) pleads impressively on behalf of an early date ; that is, a date earlier, and probably a good deal earlier, than 300 B.C.

Let me close this portion of my subject by quoting from the Upanishads the ideal description of the feelings of a righteous soul, just before it passes through the veil of death :

The door of the True is covered with a golden disk. Open that, O Pûshan, that we may see the nature of the True. O Pûshan, only seer, Yama (judge), Sûrya (sun), son of Prajâpati, spread thy rays and gather them ! The light which is thy fairest form, I see it. I am what he is (viz. the person in the sun). Breath to air, and to the immortal ! Then this my body ends in ashes. Om ! Mind, remember ! Remember thy deeds ! Mind, remember ! Remember thy deeds ! Again, lead us on to wealth (beatitude) by a good path, thou, O God, who knowest all things ! Keep far from us crooked evil, and we shall offer thee the fullest praise ! *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. i. pp. 313, 314.

The famous word "Om" in the above passage is best rendered by "Yea." It may remind us of "the Everlasting Yea" in the sense in which that phrase has been used by Carlyle ; a phrase indicating the highest law, the highest blessedness ; a supreme state, higher than which is nothing conceivable.



## CHAPTER III

### INDIA CONTINUED : SIDDARTHA THE BUDDHA

WHEN a form of religion has lasted for many ages, and has been developed in many various ways, rising sometimes to great heights of self-denying virtue, but stained at other times by the sins and infirmities which belong to human nature, it is then to be expected that attempts should, in one quarter or another, be made to reform it, to amend its faults, and to gather all the good that is in it into a new combination, and very likely with a new centre.

The religion of ancient India, which I described in the foregoing chapter, was one that peculiarly called for reform. It was a valiant effort to attain the true touch, whereby an invisible world might be revealed to us ; but experience did not bear any clear witness that it had succeeded. A strenuous asceticism had been the instrument on which it chiefly relied ; but also, a conformity to ancient rule, an adherence to an established order of society, in which the ranks were rigidly divided and kept apart ; these were the characteristics of personal and social life that had resulted from the simple habits and natural religion of the early Aryans, when they quitted the high tablelands of Iran and descended into the burning plains to the south of the Himalayan range. We must not too much find fault with their failure, which had, it will have been seen, its redeeming points ; but the great and famous attempt to reform it which was made either in the sixth or fifth century before Christ (the date is uncertain, as generally in Indian history) deserves even more of our attention than the original Hindu religion. At the period just mentioned a spirit of reform was in the air ; and though obscure compared with Buddhism, the system of Jainism arose about the same time, and endeavoured to make benevolence, conscientiousness, and human reason supreme in the ordering of men's lives, as against the authority of the Vedas and the time-honoured institution of

caste. Jainism still exists ; but this brief mention of it must here be sufficient ; and to the great reformer, Siddartha the Buddha, I now come.

Siddartha ; that was his name as an individual person ; but he is also called by his family name of Gautama or Gotama ; and again he is called Sakyamuni, the saint of the Sakya race ; and lastly, Buddha, the Enlightened One. Let me be permitted to call him Buddha ; for that is the name by which, even if not so intrinsically correct, he will best be recognised by the world of to-day.

If we desire to understand Buddhism, we must remember (as has been already said) that it was a purification of the religion of the ancient Hindus, or Brahminism as it may fairly be called ; a purification made by a person of extraordinary goodness and no mean intellectual power. The Upanishads, which are the intellectual core of Brahminism, are also the immediate antecedent of Buddhism ; and the kinship is manifested alike in the gentleness of temperament which pervades both, and in the sort of ideal aim which they prescribe for mankind at large ; although in respect of this ideal aim, Buddhism is not clearer but more obscure than the Upanishads. The idea of absorption into the Absolute Infinite Being has more apparent intelligibility than the Buddhist Nirvâna ; I am not saying that it is nearer the truth.

While we bear in mind the historical descent of Buddhism from the Brahmin religion, we must also note the important fact that Siddartha the Buddha sprang from the warrior caste of the Aryan Hindus, the Kshatriyas, and that this warrior caste had in ancient days lost their natural supremacy through the influence (partly deserved, but partly factitious and false) of the Brahmin priesthood. Hence, notwithstanding the gentleness and humility of Buddha himself, he was likely for personal as well as for general reasons to be opposed to the caste system ; and similarly the great system of sacrificial observances, which the Brahmins had elaborated in no slight degree for their own exaltation, would have no attraction for him. He did, as a matter of fact, oppose both the caste system and all sacrifices which implied the extinction of life, even of vegetable life. Yet we should be wrong if we supposed that he made open war against either of these points of practice, or against any part of the Brahmin religion. He stood, in the quietest manner, as one independent of all that he saw around him ; for though he was in a true sense formed by



the world in which he lived (as we all must be), and therefore formed by the Brahmin religion, he chose for himself what out of that religion he would accept and what he would not accept ; and to others he allowed the same liberty of choice. So tolerant a religion as the Buddhist religion has never appeared among men. But this did not mean that Buddha was indifferent in regard to belief. He was truly anxious to convert the world ; moreover, he was a singularly precise thinker, where precision was possible. He ventured on some points on which precision was not possible ; nor are we always certain of his exact relation to the elder doctrines.

While the debt of Buddha to Brahminism must be acknowledged, his personal character was yet the prime force which moulded the religion of which he was the first propagator. The accounts of his life that have reached us are mingled with fable, as was certain to be the case in an age and country in which the art of writing was of recent introduction, and in which the exercise of imagination was one of the highest pleasures ; but in all essential respects the account of him which we have received is quite natural and probable. Born as the son of a warlike chief, in the town of Kapilavatthu, in the north of India, almost within sight of the Himalayas, and (as seems the best opinion) shortly after the year 500 B.C., he lived as other men do till after attaining manhood ; he married a wife, and an infant son was born to him. Then, from causes which are but imperfectly sketched in the traditions, a sense of the world's misery fell upon him. It is said that specific instances of misery and death were the moving cause of his altered temper ; but the manner in which this is told is legendary, and the history of his early mental development is really unknown to us. But when this crisis came, he fled from his home, resolved upon intense meditation, in order if possible to discover a remedy for the sorrow of which the world is full, the cause of which seemed to him to lie in the disposition of the hearts of men. In such a conviction we cannot but see an effect of that introspective philosophy which had been the fruit of the thought of the Aryan race in India ; outward remedies were to Buddha of quite inferior value, just as they were to Yâjñavalkya.

The best account of the thoughts of Buddha at this crisis is to be found in the book called the "Buddha-Karita," by Asvaghosha ; a work centuries later than Buddha and full of imaginative exaggerations, but one which may well have preserved true

traditions of his growth in feeling and thought. Here is what Buddha is reported to have said to the monarch of the Magadhas, who had remonstrated with him on his abandonment of his home (I quote from the translation by Cowell, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XLIX. pp. 111 sqq.):

This is not to be called a strange thing,...that by thee of pure conduct, O lover of thy friends, this line of conduct should be adopted towards him who stands as one of thy friends....I will meet thee courteously with simple friendship; I would not utter aught else in my reply. I, having experienced the fear of old age and death, fly to this path of religion in my desire for liberation; leaving behind my dear kindred with tears in their faces, still more than those pleasures which are the causes of evil. I am not so afraid even of serpents nor of thunderbolts falling from heaven, nor of flames blown together by the wind, as I am afraid of these worldly objects. These transient pleasures, the robbers of our happiness and our wealth, and which float empty and like illusions through the world, in-fatuate men's minds even when they are only hoped for, still more when they take up their abode in the soul....Deer are lured to their destruction by songs, insects for the sake of the brightness fly into the fire, the fish greedy for the flesh swallows the iron hook, therefore worldly objects produce misery as their end. As for the common opinion, "pleasures are enjoyments," none of them when examined are worthy of being enjoyed; fine garments and the rest are only the accessories of things, they are to be regarded as merely the remedies for pain. Water is desired for allaying thirst; food in the same way for removing hunger; a house for keeping off the wind, the heat of the sun, and the rain; and dress for keeping off the cold and to cover one's nakedness. So too a bed is for removing drowsiness; a carriage for remedying the fatigue of a journey; a seat for alleviating the pain of standing; so bathing as a means for washing, health, and strength. External objects therefore are to human beings means for remedying pain, not in themselves sources of enjoyment; what wise man would allow that he enjoys those delights which are only used as remedial?...I have come here with a wish to see next the seer Arâda who proclaims liberation; I start this very day—happiness be to thee, O king; forgive my words which may seem harsh, through their absolute freedom from passion. *Buddha-Karita*, book XI.

The important point will be observed in the above extract that while Buddha did not regard it as legitimate to pursue pleasure, he did regard it as legitimate to assuage pain.

It is true that it may be held that the above passage is no proper evidence as to what the great teacher's final view was, since Asvaghosha attributes to him these sentiments at a period when he had not received that enlightenment which caused him to take to himself the title of Buddha. But there is no reason to think that he ever changed the sentiments expressed above. "Right conduct" was in his completed system of ethics one branch of the "noble eightfold path" for men; and there is



absolutely nothing recorded of him which should lead us to doubt that the alleviation of suffering by any innocent means was included by him in his conception of "right conduct," or "right action," during the whole period of his preaching. In fact, the time of his conversation with the king of the Magadhas, from which I have just been quoting, was the time in all his life when he was most likely to have disparaged the alleviation of suffering as a motive ; for the Brahmin religion, to which he was then attached, regarded voluntary suffering as of great value. If then Buddha would at this period have had men devote themselves to the alleviation of suffering, much more would he have given this counsel afterwards, when he had received enlightenment. (On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the authenticity of the speech just recorded is made somewhat less probable by the very fact that it so much coincides with what we know to have been the *later*, as distinguished from the earlier, conviction of Buddha.)

But Siddartha (let me recur once more here to his personal name) had not yet received enlightenment, had not yet become "Buddha," at the time of his conversation with the king of the Magadhas. He was obedient to the highest religion which he knew, the religion of the Brahmins ; for though he was not of the Brahmin caste, he was permitted to practise that asceticism which the Brahmins regarded as the highest religion, and by so doing rendered himself the equal of the Brahmins in their own estimation.

For a period of six years after leaving the king of the Magadhas, Siddartha practised pure asceticism after the manner of the Yogis, abstaining from all outward action, and joining himself to five other devotees who were animated by the same purpose as himself ; the purpose, namely, of finding the remedy for the world's huge burden of sorrow. It must be remembered that the universal belief in India then was (as in the main it is still) that the burden of man's sorrows had to be borne during many successive lives, until that crowning moment was reached, when each individual life should become identified with the Absolute Existence, with the divine Brahâmâ. Thus Siddartha and his companions were endeavouring to escape not only from sorrow in the present life, but from the burden inherent in all future lives ; and the means prescribed for them by the Brahmin religion were concentration of mind and voluntary self-inflicted pain, chiefly it would seem in the form of semi-starvation. But at last, after six years, Siddartha gave up the effort which he felt

to be useless. He was in no way bettered by his self-inflicted sufferings ; nor was the burden of the world's sorrow made lighter by them. He wandered away from his five companions, and at last, in a place called Bodhi-Gaya, he came to a great fig-tree and sat under it. Sitting there, he became enlightened ; he saw in a moment what he deemed to be supreme truth, namely, that the way of escaping sorrow was not to subject oneself to voluntary sorrow, but to restrain the instincts of pleasure-seeking desire. This was the great moment of the liberation of Siddhartha's innermost being ; now he was truly Buddha ; now he was awakened to the reality ; and the liberation was not merely of himself, but from himself. With instantaneous prophetic glance he looked forward to that time when he should enter into a state in which his own self should no longer exist ; the state called by him Nirvâna. That is the mystical consummation of Buddhism ; a consummation which, when we look upon it with the eye of the ordinary understanding, appears cold, barren, meagre, the commonplace conviction of men who are wholly devoid of religious faith ; but which to Buddha himself was a great mysterious conception, deliverance and salvation.

Let me leave the conception of Nirvâna in its mysteriousness, not seeking at present to determine what measure of truth it may contain (for indeed the absolute truth is beyond all power of man to conceive), but acknowledging, as I think we must acknowledge, that Buddha himself fell short on one side of truth, fell short of the recognition of creative power as not only the prime source of this phenomenal world, but also a power whose alliance we ourselves must seek, and to partake in which is our highest happiness. "To be blown out," as a candle, is, it appears, the meaning of Nirvâna ; and to accept this as our ideal is not in the long run salutary for us. But the full mind of Buddha is not easily apprehensible ; it will be best to begin by noting the positive side of his teaching as to this life. Here, in the treatise called the "Tevigga Sutta," is a declaration, truly magnificent, of what every sincere Buddhist ought to feel ; and it is what we must conclude that Buddha himself actually did feel, for it is a declaration that lies in the heart and essence of Buddha's creed :

He lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of love, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around, and everywhere, does he continue to pervade with heart of Love, far-reaching, grown great, and



beyond measure. Just, Vasettha, as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard—and that without difficulty—in all the four directions; even so of all things that have shape or life, there is not one that he passes by or leaves aside, but regards them all with mind set free, and deep-felt love. Verily this, Vasettha, is the way to a state of union with Brahma. And he lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of pity, sympathy, and equanimity, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around, and everywhere, does he continue to pervade with heart of pity, sympathy, and equanimity, far-reaching, grown great, and beyond measure. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XI. p. 201.

That is a passage which brings into clear light the advance which Buddha made on the Brahmin religion that had preceded him. It cannot be said that either the Upanishads, or the Laws of Manu, or the Bhagavad-gîtâ, place love in its true, high, and important position as regulative of the acts of man; they treat of the duties involved in the particular relations of life, and the general sense of duty and self-denial is expressed in them very strongly; but love, which alone gives full meaning both to duty and to self-denial, is not in them fully and adequately apprehended. By Buddha, and by him first, it was fully and adequately apprehended. No one will dispute this who considers the full sum of the teaching which has descended from him; at the same time it is impossible to keep the touch of self-regarding feeling out of the efforts of any great soul. We find it in such an expression as this, attributed to Buddha in the Sutta-Nipâta (III. 2, 16):

Woe upon life in this world; death in battle is better for me than that I should live defeated. *Ibid.* vol. x. part II. p. 71.

Nor is it to be denied that the "liberation" which Buddha sought was in a certain degree a personal deliverance; but it must not be thought of as narrowly personal. The tradition is (and it may be a true tradition), that after he had received that enlightenment which I have just been describing, the temptation came upon him to accept deliverance as a mere personal gain for himself alone, and to seek death at once, as securing him an immediate entrance into the final blessed state. This would indeed have been a narrowly personal interpretation of the deliverance which he sought; but the temptation was rejected by him. Buddha is said himself to have given the account of this temptation, shortly before his death, to his disciple Ananda (see *The Book of the Great Decease*, III. 43, 44, in the eleventh volume of the *Sacred Books of the East*). We may well believe

that temptations came upon him shortly after the great crisis in his life ; a new position must always be open to new dangers. Temptations to follow after power and pleasures are also said to have assailed him<sup>1</sup> ; and it must be understood that in all cases a personal tempter, Mâra, is introduced as pressing the temptation. It is impossible to think of the works from which I am quoting as historical in all their details ; but the general current of the narrative (especially in the Book of the Great Decease) is not improbable ; and that some trustworthy particulars of the life of Buddha would be preserved by tradition we may naturally believe. The tree under which he was sitting when he received his enlightenment became famous in after time ; and though it is impossible to think that it still exists, an ancient tree is to be seen in the traditional locality<sup>2</sup>.

We must of course distinguish between Buddha's personal acceptance of his doctrine and his resolve to preach it to others ; the resolve marked a far more decisive severance from his previous life as an ascetic than the mere acceptance of the new doctrine had done. As an ascetic on the lines of the Brahmin religion, he did not preach at all ; his aim was by solitary exercises to attain absorption into the Deity. His new doctrine, taking love as its animating principle in a degree far exceeding what had appeared in his previous efforts, was naturally accompanied by the resolution to make others participant in his own enlightenment.

The first converts of Buddha were the five ascetics whose company he had left when he had become dissatisfied with the doctrine and practice of Brahminism. It is related (*Mahāvagga*, I. 67)<sup>3</sup> that when he approached them in the lofty ardour of a newly inspired seer, they determined to treat him with silent contempt as a recreant ; but overcome by his personal dignity, were unable to maintain their determination, and inquired what his new design might be. Let me quote part of his answer to them ; and it will perhaps be most intelligible if I quote it in Oldenberg's translation, given in the valuable and learned work just mentioned :

Then the Exalted One spake to the five ascetics, saying "There are two extremes, O monks, from which he who leads a religious life must abstain. What are those two extremes ? One is a life of pleasure, devoted to desire and enjoyment : that is base, ignoble, unspiritual,

<sup>1</sup> See the *Buddha-Karita* of Asvaghosha, book XIII, in the 49th volume of *Sacred Books of the East*.

<sup>2</sup> See Cunningham, *Archæological Reports*, vol. I. p. 5, quoted by Oldenberg on p. 108 of his *Buddha*.

<sup>3</sup> See *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XIII. p. 92.



unworthy, unreal. The other is a life of mortification ; it is gloomy, unworthy, unreal. The Perfect One, O monks, is removed from both these extremes and has discovered the way which lies between them, the middle way which enlightens the eyes, enlightens the mind, which leads to rest, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvâna. And what, O monks, is the middle way, which the Perfect One has discovered, which enlightens the eye and enlightens the spirit, which leads to rest, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvâna ? It is this sacred, eightfold path, as it is called ; Right Faith, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Thought, Right Selfconcentration. This, O monks, is the middle way, which the Perfect One has discovered, which enlightens the eye and enlightens the spirit, which leads to rest, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvâna.

" This, O monks, is the sacred truth of suffering ; Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, to be united with the unloved is suffering, to be separated from the loved is suffering, not to obtain what one desires is suffering, in short the fivefold clinging (to the earthly) is suffering.

" This, O monks, is the sacred truth of the origin of suffering ; it is the thirst (for being), which leads from birth to birth, together with lust and desire, which finds gratification here and there : the thirst for pleasures, the thirst for being, the thirst for power.

" This, O monks, is the sacred truth of the extinction of suffering ; the extinction of this thirst by the complete annihilation of desire, letting it go, expelling it, separating oneself from it, giving it no room.

" This, O monks, is the sacred truth of the path which leads to the extinction of suffering ; it is this sacred, eightfold path, to wit ; Right Faith, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Thought, Right Selfconcentration." Oldenberg's *Buddha* (translated by William Hoey, M.A., pp. 127-8).

In the above passage the Buddhist conceptions of life and duty are brought before us in a manner peculiarly clear and suited to critical examination. Nirvâna is mentioned, but we are not tied down to the mere question whether Nirvâna is or is not a worthy end of human endeavour ; we are presented with a problem of everyday life, whether we ought to follow our desires or to reject them. The contention of Buddha, broadly speaking, is that we ought to reject them and not to follow them. We must not interpret this saying so rigidly as to think that Buddha would have dissuaded from the use of active means to relieve pain ; but clearly he discouraged the positive search after things pleasurable. Was he right or not ?

Let us consider how far we ourselves should go in affirming the pursuit of pleasure, or the following of strong desire, to be wrong. We should affirm it to be wrong—

(1) If the pursuit was injurious to vital energy.

(2) If it tended to the injury of affectionate intercourse with others.

(3) If it occupied time which ought to be occupied with the discharge of plain duties.

In all these cases we should agree with Buddha that the search after things pleasurable is wrong. But it need scarcely be said that admissions of so limited a character would have been very far from satisfying the great Indian thinker ; and indeed the point of view which he initially took was one from which desire and pleasure appeared things much more radically harmful than we in our ordinary thinkings are accustomed to esteem them. Let us try and approximate, as far as we can, to his initial starting point. Perhaps the following stanza, attributed to him in the *Mahā-Sudassana Sutta* (vol. XI. p. 289 of the *Sacred Books of the East*) will give an idea of his primary feeling :

How transient are all component things !

Growth is their nature and decay ;

They are produced, they are dissolved again ;

And then is best, when they have sunk to rest !

“Component things,” in this stanza, mean especially and primarily living organisms ; and it is an obvious fact that all living organisms on earth, as they originate in birth, so after a time decay in death. To Buddha, the fact that they decayed appeared a token and evidence of error in their origination. Moreover, as Buddha fully accepted the doctrine of transmigration of souls, previously taught in the Brahmin religion, the error which led to the birth of any creature was regarded by him as an error inherited from some previous existence. A human being who led a perfect life would never be born again into terrestrial life ; a human being who led a sinful life would by the fact of his wrong propensities be led into renewed life of an earthly kind ; he would be born again. All terrestrial life was looked upon by Buddha as a failure ; that seemed to him quite obvious ; the fleeting pleasures which men valued were of no account ; the final outcome of it was always decay, decay, decay, over and over and over again. That we should get out of it, be delivered from it, finally and absolutely, was in his view the right aim of man. The “error” in which it originated he called simply “ignorance” ; the man who had died implicated in passions knew not what he did and pressed forward towards a renewed birth, a renewed life with all its pains and its ultimate ending in decay and death. The grievous unsightliness of the



whole sequence, the perpetual trial and perpetual failure, appeared to Buddha to demand from all wise men the single-minded resolve to escape from it. But into what sphere should man escape? What was the good that he should seek?

The answer to this question, in Buddha's mind, lay in the word Nirvâna. Without trying to elucidate the entire meaning of that word, it will make Buddha's course of thought more intelligible if I quote here a chapter (the 15th) from the Dhammapada; not that it is necessarily Buddha's own composition, but it expresses his sentiment:

Let us live happily then, not hating those who hate us! among men who hate us let us dwell free from hatred!

Let us live happily then, free from ailments among the ailing! among men who are ailing let us dwell free from ailments!

Let us live happily then, free from greed among the greedy! among men who are greedy let us dwell free from greed!

Let us dwell happily then, though we call nothing our own! We shall be like the bright gods, feeding on happiness!

Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered is unhappy. He who has given up both victory and defeat, he, the contented, is happy.

There is no fire like passion; there is no losing throw like hatred; there is no pain like this body; there is no happiness higher than rest.

Hunger is the worst of diseases, the body the greatest of pains; if one know this truly, that is Nirvâna, the highest happiness.

Health is the greatest of gifts, contentedness the best riches; trust is the best of relationships, Nirvâna the highest happiness.

He who has tasted the sweetness of solitude and tranquillity is free from fear and free from sin, while he tastes the sweetness of drinking in the law.

The sight of the elect is good, to live with them is always happiness; if a man does not see fools, he will be truly happy.

He who walks in the company of fools suffers a long way; company with fools, as with an enemy, is always painful; company with the wise is pleasure, like meeting with kinsfolk.

Therefore one ought to follow the wise, the intelligent, the learned, the much enduring, the dutiful, the elect; one ought to follow a good and wise man as the moon follows the path of the stars. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. x.

No one can deny that the above verses contain deep truth. The evils of conflict and hatred, the happiness of wise converse, of a tranquil mind, and of adherence to law, are set forth with a conviction that we ourselves may share. Moreover, in such an expression as "The sight of the elect is good, to live with them is always happiness," a positive element of rightful happiness is affirmed, from which we may fairly infer that something of the same kind is supposed present in Nirvâna itself.

I am not indeed saying that every expression in the above extract is perfect. We may demur to the phrase, "the body is the greatest of pains," not on the ground of the transient pleasures which our body is capable of experiencing, but because both the pleasures and pains of the body are to a noble spirit capable of suggesting noble spiritual thoughts, not indiscriminately or as a matter of course, but when accepted with due regard to all the consequences of action.

One cannot help, in considering such passages as those which I have just quoted, being divided between admiration of the self-denial and deep affection which they inculcate, and regret that an undervaluing of outward action is implied in them ; that the positive moulding of the world into new external forms is discouraged rather than encouraged. The Buddhist is taught to exert himself in his inward thoughts and feelings, but he is led to refrain from adventurous action in the external world ; his task is rather to withdraw himself from, than to govern, material things. A teaching which on one side reaches a rare perfection is on another side cramped and repressed ; this is, I think, a fair judgment of the doctrine of Buddha. In saying so, I am practically denying his right to be considered the supreme teacher of mankind ; but one of the highest teachers he must always be considered. Many of his maxims have an eternal freshness and profundity, and can never be forgotten. Let me quote again from the *Dhammapada*, the treatise which perhaps of all others most represents his deepest mind :

All that we are is the result of what we have thought ; it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

All that we are is the result of what we have thought ; it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me"—in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never cease.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me"—in those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred will cease.

For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time ; hatred ceases by the absence<sup>1</sup> of hatred, this is an old rule.

He who lives looking for pleasures only, his senses uncontrolled, immoderate in his food, idle, and weak, *Mâra* (the tempter) will certainly overthrow him, as the wind throws down a weak tree.

<sup>1</sup> I rely upon Oldenberg (*Buddha*, p. 293). "Love" is perhaps too ardent a word ; "absence of hatred" is intended.



He who lives without looking for pleasures, his senses well controlled, moderate in his food, faithful and strong, him Mâra will certainly not overthrow, any more than the wind throws down a rocky mountain.

The evildoer mourns in this world, and he mourns in the next ; he mourns in both. He mourns and suffers when he sees the evil of his own work.

The virtuous man delights in this world, and he delights in the next ; he delights in both. He delights and rejoices, when he sees the purity of his own work.

The thoughtless man, even if he can recite a large portion (of the law), but is not a doer of it, has no share in the priesthood, but is like a cowherd counting the cows of others.

Whatever a hater may do to a hater, or an enemy to an enemy, a wrongly directed mind will do us greater mischief.

Death subdues a man who is gathering flowers, and whose mind is distracted, before he is satiated in his pleasures.

As the bee collects nectar and departs without injuring the flower, or its colour or scent, so let a sage dwell in his village.

Not the perversities of others, not their sins of commission or omission, but his own misdeeds and negligences should a sage take notice of.

If a fool be associated with a wise man even all his life, he will perceive the truth as little as a spoon perceives the taste of soup.

If an intelligent man be associated for one minute only with a wise man, he will soon perceive the truth, as the tongue perceives the taste of soup.

Well-makers lead the water (wherever they like) ; fletchers bend the arrow ; carpenters bend a log of wood ; wise people fashion themselves.

If a man for a hundred years worship Agni (fire) in the forest, and if he but for one moment pay homage to a man whose soul is grounded (in true knowledge), better is that homage than sacrifice for a hundred years.

Let no one think lightly of evil, saying in his heart, It will not come nigh unto me. Even by the falling of waterdrops a waterpot is filled ; the fool becomes full of evil, even if he gather it little by little.

Let no one think lightly of good, saying in his heart, It will not come nigh unto me. Even by the falling of waterdrops a waterpot is filled ; the wise man becomes full of good, even if he gather it little by little.

Is there in this world any man so restrained by humility that he does not mind reproof, as a welltrained horse the whip ? Like a well-trained horse when touched by the whip, be ye active and lively.

Let no man forget his own duty for the sake of another's, however great ; let a man, after he has discerned his own duty, be always attentive to his duty. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. x.

For ever will mankind be the better for reading such maxims as these. I have quoted them from various parts of the Dhammapada ; and I can hardly conceive that they did not come from Siddartha the Buddha himself ; but external evidence is wanting, and we do not exactly know. At all events, he was the first author of the spirit which breathes in them. Had he lived in an age of more active progress, it is possible that he

would not have reached so deeply into the things of the spirit. Yet it is impossible not to regret that he had not that experience of the power of God which so much abounds in the writings of the Hebrew prophets; it would have made him feel that that tangle of human desire and passion in which we live was capable of being disentangled and made straight, capable of being presented as in itself worthy of honour, and worthier as time goes on; and hence it would have made his energies more active in external things. He was not, as he has sometimes been called, an atheist; but the Gods were not to him, any more than they had been to the Brahmin sages, a source of strength and authors of help; their highest office was to be patterns of purity.

Let me resume the account of his life, which I have interrupted in order to give some account of his teachings. There was in it much activity, but few salient circumstances. He made disciples abundantly; among them his own son Rahula, who had been an infant when he left his home. He instituted an Order of monks; the declaration of every convert was, "I take refuge in the Buddha, in the doctrine, in the Brotherhood"; and Buddha himself is said to have accepted all believers with the words<sup>1</sup>, "Come hither, O monk; well preached is the doctrine, walk in purity, to make an end of all suffering." He instituted, at the request of his foster-mother, an Order of nuns; though it is said that this was half unwillingly; and his sense of the dangerous influence of women upon men contended strongly with his universal philanthropy. It was involved in his whole train of thought that he should regard celibacy as a higher state than marriage; yet marriage was not wholly unrecognised by him. In the Sutta-Nipâta, among a number of states which are severally described as "the highest blessing," we read the following:

Waiting on mother and father, protecting child and wife, and a quiet calling, this is the highest blessing. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. x. part ii. p. 44.

Besides the monks and nuns, there were lay adherents of Buddha and his doctrine, among whom were counted kings and nobles; and it was a matter of course that adherents of this sort were of great importance in sustaining the whole organisation of the Buddhist community.

Though self-denial is the keynote of Buddhist doctrine, and self-denial is compulsory with the poor, it would hardly be true

<sup>1</sup> Oldenberg's *Buddha*, p. 151.



to say that the Buddhist doctrine was in the first instance addressed to the poor ; the converts mentioned to us are mainly of the Brahmin and warrior castes. There is, it would appear, an exception in the person of Sunîta, who is said to have been "despised of men," a mere day-labourer, but who desired to be a monk, and was accepted by Buddha. Oldenberg, who quotes this story (*Buddha*, p. 157), will not allow any other nameable exception to the rule of high caste among the converts ; and he remarks that the intellectual difficulty of the Buddhist formula would render it more acceptable to the rich and cultured than to the poor. This we might naturally suppose ; yet I see in the recent work entitled *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot* (p. 8) a quotation from the Sûtra of Forty-two chapters, in which Buddha himself is reported to have said, "If you endeavour to embrace the Way through much learning, the Way will not be understood. If you observe the Way with simplicity of heart, great indeed is this Way."

In truth, the mere difficulty of the Buddhist formula would not be a hindrance to the poor joining the Buddhist community, if the teaching on the whole were felt to be intelligible and comforting. The probability is that the caste system was during the days of Buddhist predominance more or less undermined in India ; not through any formal intention (for Buddha never opposed the Brahmins) but by the operation of those principles of self-denial and poverty to which all Buddhists were subject. Between monk and monk, it is clear, no difference of caste could ever be allowed to operate ; and the principles of universal love so nobly propagated by Buddha would tend to produce the same equality between laymen who adhered to the religion. All this, however, would not prevent the sequence of Buddhist conversion being from the upper classes to the lower, and not from the lower to the upper, as was the case in the development of Christianity.

We picture to ourselves Buddha as mainly moving among the higher ranks of society, though not rejecting the poor, and himself to all outward appearance poor ; devoid of all tokens that might indicate a prince or a chieftain, clad in a simple yellow robe, and bearing a bowl into which might be poured the donations of rice which others would give him for his subsistence. We picture him as wandering from place to place, sometimes with hundreds of followers, inculcating everywhere the restraint of desire, teaching love and kindness as due to men and animals, teaching finally the preeminence of that state,

Nirvâna, in which our personal being shall be extinguished. We picture him as sometimes, though not at first, accompanied by women as well as by men ; as receiving gifts from women as well as from men. A great person he was felt to be all through, great and peaceful in soul ; kings treated him as one to whom they must look up ; Bimbisâra, the ruler of Magadha, and Pasenadi, the ruler of Kosala, are mentioned especially as ministering to the wants of the Buddhist community. The Brahmins can hardly have approved of his teaching ; yet he never quarrelled with them. Only once do we hear of an enemy of his, his cousin Devadatta, who tried to supplant him, and who is said to have come to an evil end ; in whatever degree this may be true, the attempt of course failed. In all the written accounts of Buddha that have been handed down to posterity, we have to remember that oral tradition lies at the base of them ; that oral tradition was for several centuries the sole means by which any knowledge of Buddha was preserved ; and hence a poetic colouring surrounds all that we read of him, and the substratum of truth has received many imaginative additions. Moreover the reverential phraseology which always (as was to be anticipated) surrounded any mention of his name was a hindrance to the full acknowledgment of those roughnesses in his ordinary career from which he could not have been entirely free. That he had to exercise discipline, directly or mediately, in the many monastic establishments which had been founded through his influence, we know ; and it is clear that nuns as well as monks came under his superintendence in this respect, though of course with nothing like the same frequency. The discipline was mild ; the severest ordinary penalty was the refusal to speak to an erring brother or sister ; (and this penalty, we read, Buddha even on his death-bed imposed on the monk Khama) ; in the last resort, the offender was expelled from the Order.

In all that he did, the personal charm of Buddha was clearly great, and was one chief cause of his success ; and as illustrative of the gentle nature of his reproofs the following anecdote may be given here<sup>1</sup> :

Thus is related to us the conversation of Buddha with Sona, a young man who had imposed on himself an excess of ascetic observances, and now, when he becomes aware of the fruitlessness of his practice, is on the point of turning to the opposite extreme, and reverting to a life of enjoyment. Buddha says to this disciple : "How is it, Sona, were you able

<sup>1</sup> I quote it from Oldenberg's *Buddha*, p. 189 ; the source is *Mahāvagga*, v. 1-15.



to play the lute before you left home?" "Yes, sire." "What do you think then, Sona, if the strings of your lute are too tightly strung, will the lute give out the proper tone and be fit to play?" "It will not, sire." "And what do you think, Sona, if the strings of your lute be strung too slack, will the lute then give out the proper tone and be fit to play?" "It will not, sire." "But how, Sona, if the strings of your lute be not strung too tight or too slack, if they have the proper degree of tension, will the lute then give out the proper sound and be fit to play?" "Yes, sire." "In the same way, Sona, energy too much strained tends to excessive zeal, and energy too much relaxed tends to apathy. Therefore, Sona, cultivate in yourself the mean of energy, and press on to the mean in your mental powers, and place this before you as your aim."

I come to the last scene of his life. We perceive, amid all the curious formality of the narrative (which may be read in the eleventh volume of the *Sacred Books of the East*), that he was greatly beloved by those among whom he had moved and preached. Shortly before this, he had accepted the invitation of a courtesan, Ambapâli by name, who had asked him to stay at her mango grove, preferring her invitation to that of the Likkhavis of Vesâli, men young and noble. The Likkhavis offered Ambapâli large sums if she would give up her guest to them, but she answered, "My Lords, were you to offer all Vesâli with its subject territory, I would not give up so honourable a feast!" Then, we read, the Likkhavis cast up their hands, exclaiming, "We are outdone by this mango girl! we are outdone by this mango girl!" but they came to Ambapâli's grove none the less, and Buddha discoursed to them there, and they departed. The feast was the next morning, Buddha and his brother monks having (it would appear) slept in the open air, in the mango grove; but the feast was in Ambapâli's dwelling house, and consisted of sweet rice and cakes.

"And when the Blessed One," we read, "had quite finished his meal, the courtesan had a low stool brought, and sat down at his side, and addressed the Blessed One, and said: 'Lord, I present this mansion to the order of mendicants, of which the Buddha is the chief.' And the Blessed One accepted the gift; and after instructing, and rousing, and gladdening her with religious discourse, he rose from his seat and departed thence."

Such a narrative gives a milder idea of Buddha's behaviour towards women than some of the sayings which are elsewhere attributed to him; but a rigid severity was not according to his character. In the same way, we perceive that his general maxims of abstaining from animal food were not intended to be of absolute stringency; for the immediate cause of his death (though his health previously had not been strong) was

partaking of a meal of dried pork which Kunda, a worker in metal, had prepared for him. It is interesting to note that he was particularly anxious that Kunda should not feel any remorse for the accidental result ; and he begged his best-loved disciple, Ananda, to assure Kunda that the result was not for harm but for good ; and that the result to Kunda himself would be not harm, but blessing. Buddha took more than one journey after the meal which caused his death, and the vehement pain which he suffered at first passed away ; and then the end came tranquilly. He had been conducted to a place where two Sâla trees were blooming, though it was not the season for such flowers ; “ I am weary, Ananda, and would lie down,” he said. Presently, after much conversation, Ananda went away, and we read this :

Now the venerable Ananda went into the Vihâra, and stood leaning against the lintel of the door, and weeping at the thought : “ Alas ! I remain still but a learner, one who has yet but to work out his own perfection. And the Master is about to pass away from me—he who is so kind ! ”

Now the Blessed One called the brethren, and said, “ Where then, brethren, is Ananda ? ” . . . And the Blessed One called a certain brother, and said, “ Go now, brother, and call Ananda in my name, and say, Brother Ananda, the Master calls for thee.”

“ Very well, brother,” said the venerable Ananda, in assent, to that brother. And he went up to the place where the Blessed One was, and when he had come there, he bowed down before the Blessed One, and took his seat respectfully on one side.

Then the Blessed One said to the venerable Ananda, as he sat there by his side : “ Enough, Ananda ! Do not let yourself be troubled ; do not weep ! Have I not already, on former occasions, told you that it is in the very nature of all things most near and dear unto us that we must divide ourselves from them, leave them, sever ourselves from them ? . . . For a long time, Ananda, you have been very dear to me by thoughts of love, kind and good, that never varies, and is beyond all measure. You have done well, Ananda ! Be earnest in effort, and you too shall soon be free from the great evils—from sensuality, from individuality, from delusion, and from ignorance ! ”

So did Buddha, in the hour of his approaching dissolution, counsel his best-loved disciple ; and not him only ; for presently the other brethren came too, and to them also he addressed words of counsel. Ananda lamented that the great Master should die in so poor and mean a place, and even proposed that he should be moved to Benares or some other great city near at hand ; but Buddha rejected the idea, and indeed the time was past for such transference. It so happened, however, that the Mallas of Kusinârâ (a neighbouring town) were holding a



meeting in their council chamber ; these were summoned, and they came with their wives and families, and to each family in succession Buddha addressed a few words, and they departed with tears. Then lastly he asked all the brethren, whether they had any doubt of the truth of his message, and whether they had anything to ask him. But they had no doubt, nor anything to ask. Just before this, the last convert made by Buddha during his lifetime, Subhadda, had professed his acceptance of Buddha's message, and had entered the Order. And then Buddha uttered his last words, "Hearken, O disciples, I charge you ; everything that cometh into being passeth away ; strive without ceasing." And then, as we should say, he died ; or, as his disciples said, he entered by successive stages into Nirvâna, the final blessedness.

Such was the death, some twenty-three or twenty-four centuries ago, of one of the most loving spirits that ever lived on earth. I have of necessity greatly abridged the narrative ; and since I think it may be in the main accepted as true, I have not added to it the few wonders which were introduced into it by his followers in after ages. It was natural for them to think that at such a moment the earth should quake and the heavens thunder, and that Brahmâ Sahampati, the creative Deity, should utter a declaration as to the importance of that moment, when the victorious Buddha was finally perfected.

I have implied that there were qualities in which Buddha fell short. The desires and passions of ordinary men have a certain measure of goodness which he seldom recognised and perhaps in terms denied ; and though it would not be right to interpret such a denial too rigidly, it cannot be said that material happiness was any part of the aim which he set before men. Buddha hardly felt the full compass of his assertion, when he said that material happiness is transitory. It is transitory in a certain obvious sense ; but it leaves its mark on the soul ; and honourable happiness leaves a mark which we should be sorry to dispense with. Yet when we reflect how much dishonourable happiness there is in the world, the happiness of one implying the unhappiness of many, our surprise may be lessened that Buddha condemned the pursuit after material happiness without making any exception to such condemnation.

Even at the present day, how often does the happiness of the rich involve the unhappiness of the poor ; and if in the present day, how much more in the age of Buddha, an age in

which the world was full of cruelties, often deliberately perpetrated under the name of justice, to which there is no parallel in the world of to-day ; an age in which indifference to the welfare of the stranger and the alien was almost universal ! We must not be greatly surprised if Buddha thought that desire and passion, whose fruits in so many instances he saw to be bad, were things intrinsically and always to be avoided. It is permitted to ourselves to hope that we may purify desire and passion without abolishing them ; and the experience of the world has advanced so far that we may say that, for their perfect purification, God's help is needed. But the experience of the world had not advanced so far in Buddha's age.

Only it would not be right, because he was deficient on the side of trust in God, to put out of sight all that he did on the human side for the advancement of mankind. Can it be said that we of the twentieth century after Christ are beyond the need of such instruction as that which I have quoted from the Dhammapada ? Few of us, I think, are beyond being benefited by Buddha's axioms of morality.

After the death of Buddha, his doctrine spread with vigour in the north-east of India, and councils were held for the determination of points of greater or less importance in connexion with the religion. But the adoption of the Buddhist creed by the great king Asoka in the third century before Christ was perhaps the most important of all the events in the early history of Buddhism, that is to say between the death of Buddha and the Christian era. Asoka was the grandson of Chandragupta, to whom ambassadors had come from the Greek king Seleucus Nicator, one of the successors of Alexander. With all his greatness, Asoka's family had originally sprung from the lowest caste, the Sûdras, and thus he had a certain interest in the overthrow of Brahminism. He reigned over all India north of the Vindhya hills, and numerous inscriptions, put up by his command, still remain, and commend to us the precepts of Buddha.

Another powerful king, who in Buddhist writings is known as Milinda, but who was of Greek origin and in his native tongue is known as Menander or Menandros, attached himself to the doctrine at the end of the third century before Christ. The Questions of King Milinda is a famous Buddhist work, translated in the 35th and 36th volumes of *Sacred Books of the East*. He reigned in the north-west of India, and is said to have made considerable conquests.



Thus, whether by the power of monarchs, or by its own dignity and charm, the Buddhist doctrine and discipline, the Buddhist monasteries and lay communities, made great progress in the world for many centuries after the death of Buddha himself. In the first century of our era Buddhism was carried into China, and had great influence in that country. In the sixth century of our era it was carried into Japan, and from the ninth century onward spread there rapidly. (Lafcadio Hearn's *Japan, an Interpretation*, pp. 204-5.) Undoubtedly the Buddhist doctrine had power as a missionary creed.

Yet, when we look into it, this power would seem to need something to supplement it. In India (except so far as Burmah and Ceylon are concerned) Buddhism proved after all to be but a transitory phase of belief. For five hundred years it grew; then slowly it began to yield before the ancient Brahmin religion, which had never really vanished from the hearts of the Hindus. As it was not by the help of persecution that Buddhism arose in India, so neither was it through persecution by its enemies that it fell. It fell, we cannot doubt, because it could not unite itself with Brahminism, and Brahminism, with all its faults, was more tangible, more imaginable, than Buddhism. Something there was which needed to be added to Buddhism, before it could deeply affect the popular mind. In China and Japan Buddhism did survive, because it was capable of uniting itself with that ancestor worship which is the heart of the religion of those two great countries. But with China and Japan a future chapter must deal more fully.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANCIENT RELIGION : PERSIA

TRULY does Darmesteter say of the religion of ancient Persia, "There has been no other great belief in the world that ever left such poor and meagre monuments of its past splendour." Yet the religion of ancient Persia has one claim on our regard which the more famous religions of ancient Greece and Rome have not ; it has survived, whereas they have perished. The name of Zeus or Jupiter is no longer honoured by any man as a worthy name of the Supreme Being ; but Auramazda, to whom the Persian king Darius, five hundred years before Christ, recorded his devotion on the rocks of Behistun, in cuneiform letters legible to-day and interpreted by scholars, is worshipped at this hour by the community of the Parsis, who mostly have found a refuge in India. Ahura Mazda—Auramazda—Ormuzd ; whether it is in one or another of these three forms that the Supreme Being is named and worshipped, the worshipper belongs to the same line of tradition ; and that tradition has never quite died out as a living word among men.

But when we ask what is the history of this tradition ; when we ask how and at what date it originated, and what we are to think of the famous prophet Zoroaster, or Zarathustra, whose name is so intimately associated with it ; when we ask what we are to think of the scarcely less celebrated Magi, who were its priests ; when we seek to judge of the real worth of the religion indicated by these names, its power to strengthen the human heart and to direct men's conduct fruitfully and honourably ; we find ourselves in a maze of doubt ; and the most learned persons, who have solved the enigmas of the language, who have made plain the Avesta and the Pahlavi texts, who have wrested from the cuneiform inscriptions their long-hidden secret—these men, so eminent and so courageous in their researches, have wide differences among themselves as to the century in which



Zoroaster lived, as to his relation to the Magi, and are not even all of them sure that there ever was such a person at all.

Let me try to unravel the tangled skein of the history which gives occasion for differences so serious ; remembering always my dependence on the learned men who are the first authorities on the subject.

The sacred book of the Persian religion is called the Avesta ; it resembles the Bible rather than the Koran in this, that it was written by many persons, not by one person, and at different epochs of time. If we knew precisely the date at which the several parts of it were respectively written, we should have an invaluable key to the history ; but this knowledge does not lie on the surface, at any rate.

The different parts of the Avesta are these : First, the Gâthas ; the oldest part of the collection and written in a dialect different, generally speaking, from what we find elsewhere ; though there are some other examples of it. The Gâthas are poetry, and are recited as hymns in the religious services of the Parsis even at the present day. They are therefore not history ; yet there is no part of the whole Avesta in which there is so near an approximation to history as in the Gâthas. The name of Zarathustra occurs frequently in them, and also the name of Vistâspa, the royal patron of Zarathustra, and the names of others ; and the mention of these persons is the mention of real contemporaries of the writer, whoever he may be ; and the writer and his friends are engaged in serious conflicts with enemies, preaching and praying, fighting and making converts, nurturing their cattle, and lastly marrying ; for the final hymn of the Gâthas relates the marriage of Zarathustra's daughter to one of his attached followers. Well does Professor Mills contrast the Gâthas with the later parts of the Avesta in the following passage :

In the Gâthas all is sober and real. The Kine's soul is indeed poetically described as wailing aloud, and the Deity with His Immortals is reported as speaking, hearing, and seeing ; but with these rhetorical exceptions, everything which occupies the attention is practical in the extreme. Grehma and Bendva, the Karpans, the Kavis, and the Usigs, are no mythical monsters. No dragon threatens the settlements, and no fabulous beings defend them. Zarathustra, Gâmâspa, Frashaostra, and Maidyômâh ; the Spitâmas, Hvôgvas, the Haêkataspas, are as real, and are alluded to with a simplicity as unconscious, as any characters in history. Except inspiration, there are also no miracles. All the action is made up of the exertions and passions of living and suffering men. Let

the Zendist<sup>1</sup> study the Gâthas well, and then let him turn to the Yasts or the Vendidad ; he will go from the land of reality to the land of fable. He leaves in the one a toiling prophet, to meet in the other a phantastic demigod. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxxi. p. xxvi.

The passage here quoted may stand as a prelude to all study of the Avesta ; it strikes the note of a contrast which is never to be forgotten ; it brings clear before us the fact that in whatever degree imagination or superstition may enter into the Zoroastrian sacred writings, there is solid rock at the bottom of them ; and, it may be added, true conscientiousness, real heartfelt faith. These are the qualities inherent in the Gâthas, rugged though they be. Outside the Gâthas, the Avesta consists of the Vendidad, the Yasts, the later Yasnas (or hymns), and some other shorter treatises which have considerable likeness to the Yasnas. But for the present let us dismiss these later treatises, and fix our attention on the Gâthas alone. In the Gâthas Zoroaster comes before us as a man ; it would seem that the greater part of them was written by him ; perhaps even the whole. And what about the Magi ? I believe, myself, that the Magi do to a certain extent lie behind the Gâthas, in a manner which must be explained later. But this is not universally admitted, and it is certain that the Magi are never mentioned in the Gâthas. Zoroaster then for the present comes before us alone. Our dates are undetermined ; but whether we are reading about events which were taking place in the fourteenth century before Christ, or whether we are reading about events which were taking place in the sixth century before Christ, or whether some intermediate era between these two extremes is before us, we are reading in the Gâthas about real persons, real things. Let us examine their nature.

I have said that the Gâthas are poetry, and that they are recited as hymns in the religious services of the modern Parsis. But it would be incorrect to suppose that they were originally written as hymns, or with any view to religious services. Of the later Yasnas it would be correct to say this : the later Yasnas were written for a religion that had become dominant ; and adornment and splendour, not contention, is their aim. But contention is written on every line of the Gâthas. They are songs, but songs of battle ; the enemy is present, and the writer is praying and fighting against him. Who is the enemy ? The

<sup>1</sup> By the Zendist is meant properly " the student of the language of the Avesta " ; but Professor Mills doubtless intends by it " the student of the Avesta " simply.



enemy comes before us first in material fashion, as a nomad horde ravaging the peaceful works of agriculture and pasture. Take, as an instance of the feeling of the prophet (for a prophet the writer of the Gâthas is all through), the following words from that early hymn (or Yasna) which is numbered as the 29th. It is a prayer raised by the suffering peasantry (symbolised as the soul of the Kine, or as others translate it, the Ox-soul) to God and his Righteousness for protection against the marauders :

Unto you the Soul of the Kine cried aloud : For whom did ye create me, and by whom did ye fashion me ? On me comes the assault of wrath, and of violent power, the blow of desolation, audacious insolence, and thievish might. None other pasturegiver have I than you, therefore do ye teach me good tillage for the fields. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxxi. p. 6 (translation by Professor Mills).

Thus does Zarathustra (let me be allowed the form of his name used in the Avesta) plunge into the heart of practical religion. Through him the "Kine" (or the "settlements" as he calls them elsewhere) plead with Ahura Mazda and Asha—with God and his Righteousness. We must not suppose that Ahura Mazda and Asha are thought of as two different beings, though they proceed to converse together ; but the representation is poetical. The question is : Who shall be appointed leader of the herds in their distress ? The difficulty of such an appointment, men being the imperfect beings that they are, is urged. Upon this Zarathustra intervenes :

The Great Creator is himself most mindful of the uttered indications which have been fulfilled beforehand hitherto in the deeds of demon gods and men, and of those which shall be fulfilled by them hereafter. He Ahura is the discerning arbiter ; so shall it be to us as he shall will ! Therefore it is that we both, my soul and the soul of the mother Kine, are making our supplications for the two worlds to Ahura, and with hands stretched out in entreaty, when we pray to the Great Creator with questions in our doubt. Not for the righteous liver, not for the thrifty, shall there be destruction together with the wicked. *Ibid.* vol. xxxi. pp. 8, 9.

The two worlds here mentioned are the material world and the spiritual world. Immediately upon this Zarathustra himself is appointed the people's guide ; it is Ahura Mazda who speaks :

This man is found for me here who alone has hearkened to our indications, Zarathustra Spitama ! Our mighty and completed acts of grace he desires to enounce for us, for Me, the Great Creator, and for Righteousness ; wherefore I will give him the good abode and authoritative place of such an one as speaks !

The Kine weep, regarding Zarathustra as too feeble for so great a purpose ; but the hymn ends by Zarathustra praying for aid in his great cause, so that "the peaceful amenities of home and quiet happiness" may be restored to the sufferers.

It is in the hymn (or Yasna) numbered as immediately preceding the one just quoted (but the arrangement cannot be held certain) that Vistâspa, the royal patron of Zoroaster, is first named, and also Frashaostra, one of the most intimate friends and allies of the prophet. These names, along with other names of friends and foes, occur frequently in the Gâthas.

Zoroaster, it will be seen, founds himself on this material world in which we live, but reaches out of it, in his thoughts and in his prayers, to the heavenly invisible world. He desires, for himself and for those with whom he is allied, the happiness of peaceful homes and prosperous communities—prosperous according to the ideas of that primitive time, the prosperity of pasture and agriculture ; and he prays to Ahura Mazda (the "Wise Lord") that this may be accomplished. But his religion is not confined to these simple elements. Before him stand the enemy, the despoilers of that peasantry whose protector and advocate he is ; and it is not enough for him to fight against them with material weapons, he must also find out how these foes are regarded in the divine counsels—Does Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, approve of them ? Surely not ; it is by another spirit that they are inspired ; and it is not only in their predatory practices, it is in the thoughts of their heart, in that which they call their religion, in the deities whom they worship, that Zoroaster feels them to be hostile. There is then, besides the Spirit which is akin to Ahura Mazda, a false spirit also in the world, deceiving and leading astray ; and as Zoroaster preaches adherence to the Wise Spirit, so is he constrained to preach avoidance of the false spirit. How naturally then did there arise in him that view of the double character of the world, of two principles, one good and the other evil, contending together in all things for the mastery, by which the doctrine which he preached became afterwards best known to posterity ! It is called a dualism ; but we must not do Zoroaster the injustice of supposing that he preached it with a technical rigidity, or that he thought of his evil spirit as the equal adversary of the Wise Spirit. His feeling is truly monotheistic ; and it is the Good that will conquer ; that is his unmistakable prophecy, though we may have some doubt as to the precise end which he assigned to the evil. But it is time now to quote his own



description of the doctrine to which I have been referring; it is from the 30th *Yasna*, immediately succeeding to that from which I have already quoted:

And now I will proclaim, O ye who are drawing near and seeking to be taught! those animadversions which appertain to Him who knows all things whatsoever; the praises which are for Ahura, and the sacrifices which spring from the Good Mind, and likewise the benignant meditations inspired by Righteousness. And I pray that propitious results may be seen in the lights.

Hear ye then with your ears; see ye the bright flames with the Better Mind. It is for a decision as to religions, man and man, each individually for himself. Before the great effort of the cause, awake ye to our teaching!

Thus are the primeval spirits who as a pair combining their opposite strivings, and yet each independent in his action, have been famed of old. A better thing, they two, and a worse, as to thought, as to word, and as to deed. And between these two let the wisely acting choose aright. Choose ye not as the evildoers!

When the two spirits came together at the first to make life, and life's absence, and to determine how the world at last shall be ordered, for the wicked the worst life, for the holy the Best Mental State: he who was the evil of them both chose the evil, thereby working the worst of possible results, but the more bounteous spirit chose the Divine Righteousness, he who clothes upon himself the firm stones of heaven as his robe. And he chose likewise them who content Ahura with actions, which are performed really in accordance with the faith.

And between these two spirits the Demon-gods can make no righteous choice, since we have beguiled them<sup>1</sup>. As they were questioning and debating in their council, the Worst Mind approached them that he might be chosen. And thereupon they rushed together unto the Demon of Fury, that they might pollute the minds of mortals. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxxi. pp. 28 sqq.

There is a dualism, doubtless, in the above passage; but it is the dualism of experience, not the dualism of faith. In faith, Ahura Mazda stands supreme; but as a matter of fact, the world contains both the good and the bad, and these, to Zoroaster's eye, proceed each from the spirit which is the primary principle, respectively, of the good and of the bad. Without saying that this is a perfect philosophy, it is yet a very natural philosophy,

<sup>1</sup> One would be glad to escape this predestinarian sentiment. I have no claim to judge whether the translation is or is not correct; but I observe that this clause is absent from Professor Moulton's translation in *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 350: "Between these twain the demons also chose not aright, for infatuation came upon them as they took counsel together, so that they chose the Worse Thought. Then they rushed together to Violence, that they might enfeeble the world of man."

I should add that in transcribing the translation given by Professor Mills, I have felt myself at liberty to omit words which he has put into parentheses, and which I understand are not in the original, in cases where the insertion was not necessary for the understanding of the passage.

and does not hinder the unity of that monotheism which is the true dominating belief expressed in the Gâthas. In the sequel of the passage the aspiration is uttered that the prophet and those whom he addresses may be among those who renovate the world; and the Yasna concludes as follows (I will quote this time from Professor Moulton's translation in *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 351):

Then truly on the Lie shall come the destruction of delight; but they that get them good name shall be partakers in the promised reward in the fair abode of Good Thought, of Mazdah, and of Right.

If, O ye mortals, ye mark those commandments that Mazdah hath ordained—of happiness and pain, the long punishment for the liars, and blessings for the righteous—then hereafter ye shall have bliss.

Most strongly before Zoroaster's mind are the two conceptions of Good and Evil; most strongly does he urge men to follow Good, and to forsake Evil. And when we ask what he means by Good and Evil, we see that by Good he means peaceful industry, and by Evil he means that which disturbs, frustrates, and ruins peaceful industry; and he is convinced that as there is a good God who helps the peacefully industrious, so there are false deities to whom the authors of ruin and destruction apply for aid. But he is convinced also that the conflict between Good and Evil will come to an end, and that they who have followed good shall be rewarded; and from other expressions which he uses we see that he holds this reward to be eternal; he believes in immortality. Thus in *Yasna* xxxi. 6 we read (the translation is by Professor Mills):

That verily shall be the best of all words to him which the Allwise one will declare to me in very deed, that word which is the Mâthra (or counsel) of Welfare and of Immortality;

and again in § 21 of the same *Yasna*:

But Ahura Mazda will give both Universal Weal and Immortality in the fulness of his Righteous Order, and from himself as the head of Dominion. And he will likewise give the Good Mind's vigorous might to him who in spirit and deeds is his friend.

How Zoroaster arrived at the conception of personal immortality we do not know; but it is not an unnatural belief for men, and the quaint conception of the Bridge of the Separator (the bridge over which, after death, the righteous pass safely, but from which the wicked fall into hell) is likely to have been taken by him from his predecessors. The conceptions however of a renovation of the world, and of an era when the world shall be renovated, are different from the conception of personal immortality;



and these other conceptions are much more likely to have been original with him than the conception of personal immortality. The conception of an era when the world shall be renovated, and when goodness shall be universal, is plain in the Gâthas ; the translation of Professor Moulton brings it out rather more distinctly than the translation of Professor Mills, but there is no essential difference between them, as will be seen from the following clause (*Yasna* xxx. 8) which I will quote in both versions ; Professor Mills writes :

Then, O Mazda ! the Kingdom shall have been gained for thee by thy Good Mind within thy folk.

Professor Moulton translates the same passage thus :

Then, O Mazdah ! at thy command shall Good Thought establish the Dominion in the Consummation.

The word "consummation" adds a point to the thought, but there is no real difference between the two translators here. Again, both translations mark how the happy state at which Zoroaster aims has its essence in "Good Thought," in rightness of the mind ; material happiness, though a real thing, comes afterwards. This sequence, by which mind and soul, not place or power, are the first constituents of the heavenly life, is clear all through the Gâthas ; and yet mind and soul act naturally ; happiness is the natural, not the artificial, result of them. Take, as illustrative of this, *Yasna* xxxiv. 12, 13, 14 :

Teach us by Right the paths of Good Thought that are blessed to go in—even that way of Good Thought, O Ahura, of which thou didst speak to me, whereon, a way well made by Right, the Selves of the future benefactors shall pass to the reward that was prepared for the wise, of which thou art determinant, O Mazdah. That precious reward, O Mazdah, ye will give by the action of Good Thought to the bodily life of those who are in the community that tends the pregnant cow. Moulton's *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 363.

It will be seen, moreover, from this passage, that the "renovation" or "consummation" of which Zoroaster speaks is not conceived as a catastrophe disturbing the existing order, but as a true sequence of the existing order rightly directed. How the spirits of the holy departed are related to this material order in its renovation and fresh excellence, is not altogether clear ; but we must not expect clearness on every point ; and to ourselves the same question may occasion a difficulty.

No one, I am sure, can study the passages which I have here quoted, or the Gâthas as a whole, without admiration for the

mind which had so sane an apprehension of religion and morality, or without recognition of the reality of Zoroaster, or Zarathustra, as a man. This conclusion stands, whatever we may think of the questions which surround this name. The question, in what century Zoroaster lived ; the question, in what relation he stood to the Magi ; the question, who the Magi were, and what we ought to think of them ; the question, who those opponents were, against whom Zoroaster in the Gâthas inveighs so fiercely ; the question, in what relation he stood towards those kings of Persia, who are famous in history, Cyrus and Cambyes, Darius and Xerxes and their successors ; these questions have hardly been touched by me as yet, and very important questions they are. But those who differ most largely on these points may yet agree that, somewhere in the early centuries, long before the Christian era, there lived a man endowed with singular clearness of spiritual vision, and rectitude of principle ; that he lived somewhere in the great country called Iran, the country which stretches from the river Tigris in the west to the frontiers of India in the east, and from the Caspian and Aral seas in the north to the Arabian sea in the south. This man, whom we must call Zoroaster or Zarathustra, left the memory and the influence of his spirit to a long line of posterity, through that literary work with which the present chapter has so far been concerned, the Gâthas ; and though his spiritual posterity often misinterpreted him, and used his authority to support practices and beliefs which would have been abhorrent to him, the truth which he proclaimed survived, and is at this day not unworthily embraced by the few who accept him as their master in religion.

It is interesting to compare and contrast him with the great teacher with whom my last chapter was concerned, Siddartha the Buddha ; both of them ardent and unselfish ; but Buddha preaching love and self-denial rather than practical work, and indeed laying little stress on the work of the hands ; Zoroaster on the contrary laying the greatest stress on peaceable work, and though valuing love, not laying the stress on love which Buddha did ; Buddha thinking of Divine beings as examples rather than as helpers, Zoroaster appealing with all the fervour of his soul to the Supreme Deity for help. It will be seen that they were in some degree the complements of each other ; and as I have spoken of the defect of Buddha as being the undervaluing of personal desire, so I may speak of the defect of Zoroaster as being a want of tenderness towards enemies ; his danger was, in thinking



of the enemy, to forget the man ; and though he is not chargeable himself with cruelty (as far as we know), his followers afterwards were not so blameless. Both Buddha and Zoroaster strove to make their teaching universal, a teaching for all men ; and it is especially worthy of notice that, while Iran was the great tract over which the influence of Zoroaster peculiarly extended, and to which he brought his first message, he welcomed those who were traditionally the foes of the natives of Iran, and who afterwards were his own chief foes, the Turanians of the north. Let me give the passage in the Gâthas (*Yasna* XLVI. 12) as translated by Professor Williams Jackson :

When Asha (Righteousness) came unto those that are to be named as the children, and children's children, of Fryâna, the Turanian who zealously doth further the possessions of Armaiti [increasing Earth by agricultural activity] and when Vohu Manah (Good Thought) took up his abode with them, (then) the Lord Mazda is announced to them to their comfort. *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran*, pp. 83, 84.

In that passage national narrowness is repudiated. It is not to be denied that the story which we gather from the prophetic deliverances of the Gâthas is obscure and fragmentary ; the detailed personal references, such as that which speaks of the marriage of Zoroaster's daughter, or the quaint mention of the " ten mares with a stallion and a camel " which Zoroaster hopes to have (*Yasna* XLIV. 18), do not throw much light on the history ; and there is a singular absence of mention of places. But the main purport of the preaching indicated by the Gâthas must be accepted as real ; and now, to make it a little more determinate, let us ask who were the enemies against whom Zoroaster had to contend.

The enemies, as has already been said, were not merely hostile through their habits of despoiling and ravaging the peaceful settlements, but also in their religious beliefs and sentiments. Their deities are called the Daêvas ; when the " demon-gods " were spoken of in the extract from the 30th *Yasna* given above, the original gives " Daêvas " ; and all through the Gâthas the Daêvas are the base deities who work ill. Here is the description of them, together with a description of one of their worshippers and adorers, from one of the earliest Gâthas (*Yasna* XXXII. 3, 4, 5, 9, 10) :

But ye, ye Daêvas all, and he that highly honours you, are seed of the Bad Thought—yea, and of the Lie and of Arrogance ; likewise your

deeds, whereby ye have long been known in the seventh region of the earth<sup>1</sup>.

For ye have brought it to pass that men who do the worst things shall be called beloved of the Daêvas, separating themselves from Good Thought, departing from the will of Mazdah Ahura and from Right.

Thereby ye defrauded mankind of happy life and of immortality, by the deed which he and the Bad Spirit together with Bad Thought and Bad Word taught you, ye Daêvas, and the Liars, so as to ruin mankind.

\* \* \* \* \*

The teacher of evil destroys the lore, he by his teachings destroys the design of life, he prevents the possession of Good Thought from being prized. These words of my spirit I wail unto you, O Mazdah, and to the Right.

He it is that destroys the lore, who declares that the Ox and the Sun are the worst thing to behold with the eyes, and hath made the pious into liars, and desolates the pastures and lifts his weapon against the righteous man. Moulton's *Early Zoroastrianism*, pp. 355-357.

It will be evident from this passage that the Daêvas are not the product of any chance superstition ; they are deities with an accredited worship. But the whole district of Iran, in some part of which Zoroaster was preaching, was a district in which the old Aryan religion, of which we have the leading example in the Hindu sacred writings, was dominant in the earliest times known to us ; and in the Hindu sacred writings the Gods are called "Devas." Is it not plain, then, that the Daêvas and the Devas are the same ? And it follows from this that Zoroaster in the Gâthas was attacking the deities of the old Aryan religion, which, probably in a corrupted form, was strong in Iran. If any doubt could remain on the subject, it would be dispelled by the fact that Zoroaster attacks that famous divinity of the Aryans, Haoma (called Soma by the Hindus)<sup>2</sup> and that famous Aryan hero, Yima son of Vivahvant (called by the Hindus Yama son of Vivasvat). The old Aryan religion had its drunken orgies, its slaughter of cattle (nominally for sacrifices, practically for feasting and rioting) ; to all of which Zoroaster, with his plain natural piety, was steadfastly opposed.

These followers of the Aryan religion were also, in no slight degree, nomads, and turbulent and aggressive nomads ; and it was both in their capacity of turbulent nomads, and of superstitious worshippers, that Zoroaster attacked them. He himself had been born in Media, the native country of the Magi ; but the traditions say, and the best opinion holds, that the main part of his preaching

<sup>1</sup> Geldner interprets this phrase as meaning " the central part of the earth, on which men live."

<sup>2</sup> See Moulton's *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 357, and the remark there quoted from the German critic Bartholomae : and various phrases from the 32nd and 48th *Yasnas*.



was in the east of Iran<sup>1</sup>, in such countries as Bactria and Seistan, verging on the borders of India ; perhaps also in Parthia, and in Persis (the small country which gave its name to the Persians) to the south. Somewhere in this region he had found and had converted king Vistâspa, a king who cannot have been supreme in Iran, but who still evidently had much power ; and with the help of some faithful companions of his own, and through the political power exercised by king Vistâspa, Zoroaster was endeavouring to found a stable and peaceable community, pastoral and agricultural, and a religion which trusted in the Most High, and which looked forward to better things in the future. Such was his work in life. If, in the end, he was not altogether successful in so mighty a task, can we be very much surprised ? Yet, as I began this chapter by saying, his teaching lives to the present day, and lives honourably. Not only by his professed followers, the Parsis, but from ourselves also, who have known other teachers, he deserves acknowledgment.

It remains to be added, what I have already half implied, that he was one of the Magi. This, which all the old traditions say, has only recently been doubted. But it is only the extreme difficulty of the subject, and the necessity of finding some exit out of a thorny labyrinth, which has caused it to be doubted ; and, indeed, it should not be doubted. For who has preserved the writings, the sayings, the doings of Zoroaster for us, but the Magi alone ? Who had the smallest interest in preserving for us the writings, the sayings, and the doings of Zoroaster, but the Magi ? Who has honoured Zoroaster with supreme honour, but the Magi ; and if sometimes the honour which they paid to him was technical and formal, is not that a misfortune to which all religions are liable ? Nor was the honour which the Magi paid to Zoroaster always technical and formal. It is so in the Vendîdâd, that unlucky work written when the Magi were in their decay ; but in the later Yasnas he is referred to simply as the author of the teaching which is to be honoured and followed ; and in the Yasts, in spite of the imaginative nature of those compositions, which does appear in the following passage, I do not think it a passage breathing a wholly unreal sentiment :

We worship the piety and the Fravashi (i.e. the underlying eternal spiritual being) of the holy Zarathustra ; who first thought what is good, who first spoke what is good, who first did what is good ; who was

<sup>1</sup> See Professor Williams Jackson in his *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran*, pp. 182-225, and Professor Moulton in *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 84, and note the quotation from Bartholomae given by Moulton.

the first Priest, the first Warrior, the first Plougher of the ground ; who first knew and first taught....In whose birth and growth the waters and the plants rejoiced ; in whose birth and growth the waters and the plants grew ; in whose birth and growth all the creatures of the good creation cried out, Hail ! Hail to us ! for he is born, the Athravan, Spitama Zarathustra. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XXIII. pp. 200, 201 (translation by Darmesteter).

The Farvardin Yast, from which the above passage is taken, is the Yast which takes as its theme that peculiarly Magian conception, the Fravashi, the underlying spiritual existence of every living being, which is the eternal element in every living being ; therefore this Yast must be a Magian composition ; and besides the word "Athravan," the word for "priest" which the Magians peculiarly used, ratifies it as Magian. Not wholly insincere do I think it ; and as far as this passage goes, one might more reasonably hold Zoroaster to have been the founder of the Magian body, than not to have belonged to them at all. Some indeed have taken him to have been the founder of the Magi, regarding the Magi as a sect. But this cannot reasonably be held ; the teaching of the Magi cannot be derived from the teaching of the Gâthas ; on the other hand, the Gâthas are the highest point of that religious sentiment, to which the Magi could not reach, but towards which they had been tending. We must then hold with the tradition, that Zoroaster was not the founder of the Magi, but that he was one of the Magi.

And now, who were the Magi ? Herodotus tells us that they were a tribe of the Medes ; and we have no reason to doubt his statement. Whether they were a tribe (as we may rather believe) or a sect, they had great religious influence, and not only in Media ; not only, even, in Iran ; for we find them in Babylon, and beyond Babylon. They preceded Zoroaster in time, as a consideration of their tenets will show ; it is a confirmation of this when we find that not all of them followed Zoroaster, or honoured him with special reverence. The Magi of Media did so honour him ; the Magi of Babylon treated him more remotely. It is beyond doubt that the Magi of Babylon came originally from Media ; but there is a strong distinction between them and the Magi of Media. The Magi of Media worshipped supremely Ahura Mazda, to whom Zoroaster himself (as will have been seen from the Gâthas) gave his devotion and addressed his prayers ; the Magi of Babylon worshipped supremely Mithra, the God who originally represented the heavenly light, but who came to be identified with the Sun. Now it is true that the Magi of Media did recognise and worship



Mithra, and sometimes appear to put him even as equal to Ahura Mazda ; but their true sentiment is, that Ahura Mazda is the sole highest. On the other hand, the worship of Ahura Mazda does sometimes filter through to the religion of the Babylonian Magi ; but not very much ; it is Mithra to whom they address their chief devotion. It was from the Magi of Babylon and not from the Magi of Media, that that Mithraism was descended which, passing through Asia Minor, became in the second and third centuries of our era the chief rival of Christianity in the Roman empire. To confirm this important point let me quote two paragraphs from the splendid and comprehensive work of M. Cumont (*Textes et Monuments Figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra*), published at Brussels in 1899.

De tout qui précède, se dégage donc un résultat très net. Soit qu'on examine les caractères du mithriacisme, soit qu'on suive le cours de son histoire, on aboutit à la même conclusion : les mystères qui se sont répandus dans l'empire romain sont les héritiers directs du mazdéisme, tel qu'il était pratiqué à Babylone sous les derniers rois Achéménides.

Le mithriacisme n'est donc pas, comme on l'a cru à tort, une altération du Zoroastrisme avestique. Il s'est développé à côté de lui et indépendamment de lui, ils sont l'un et l'autre une transformation de l'antique religion des tribus iraniennes. Cumont, vol. I. p. 11.

The distinction drawn by M. Cumont in the last paragraph is fundamental ; but in the first paragraph one word should, I think, be altered ; instead of "mazdeism," it would be more exact to speak of "primitive magianism" as the source of Mithraism. If mazdeism, or in other words the worship of Ahura Mazda, had been the source of Mithraism, we could not but have found Ahura Mazda (or Auramazda) recorded on the Mithraic monuments as at least the equal of Mithra ; whereas in reality the Mithraic monuments hardly recognise Ahura Mazda at all. But it is evident that M. Cumont uses the term "mazdeism" technically to express the Persian religion in the form which it took when it had separated itself from the original Aryan worship.

I must not linger much longer over the Magi of Babylon, for they were after all a subordinate branch of Magianism, and were not Zoroastrian at all ; but a few things more must be said about them. How far back can we trace them ?

Professor Moulton has acutely pointed out that they are found, in the year 591 B.C., as far west as Jerusalem. Here is the passage in which the prophet Ezekiel indicates them ; not indeed naming them, but unmistakably referring to their ceremonial. The passage professes to be a vision, but the facts

mentioned were evidently known to the prophet through actual witnesses :

And he brought me into the inner court of Jehovah's house, and behold, at the door of the temple of Jehovah, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of Jehovah, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have turned again to provoke me to anger; and lo, they put the branch to their nose. Ezekiel viii. 16, 17.

The five and twenty men were Jews, as is implied in the prophet's reproof; but their ritual is marked as Magian by their worshipping the sun, and "putting the branch to their nose." The branch is the barsom or baresman, a bundle of thin tamarisk rods, which the Magian worshipper held in his hand when sacrificing. Another Biblical passage quoted by Professor Moulton in this connexion is Jeremiah xxxix. 3 and 13, where a Babylonian public officer, called the "Rab-Mag," is mentioned among the princes who entered Jerusalem after its capture by Nebuchadnezzar; the title "Rab-Mag" being most naturally interpreted as "Chief of the Magi." The date indicated in Jeremiah is five years later than the date of the passage in Ezekiel; the two passages support one another, and the extract given from M. Cumont supports both; and as the Medians and Babylonians were friendly to each other (both having been enemies to Nineveh) the whole is exceedingly natural. The Sun, it will be seen, was the object of worship to the Magi of Babylon; and Mithra, interpreted as the Sun, was the object of worship to the Mithraists afterwards. It only remains to add that the Mithraists of the Roman empire were, not indeed the followers of a true religion, but still the most estimable, except the philosophic schools, of all the heathen rivals and opponents of early Christianity; so that we have some reason, on their account, to think well of Magianism in its original form. That Mithraism fell before Christianity, is of course a matter neither of surprise nor of regret; and saying this, I now leave the Magi of Babylon.

Of the Magi as they originally came into prominence in Media, a good opinion may reasonably be held, as I have just intimated. In their chequered career afterwards, they committed serious sins, and ran into great follies; they never reached to anything like the height of Zoroaster, their greatest example; but in their first origin they merit some approval, and in the after



history they did carry down for the recognition of posterity, though very imperfectly represented in their own persons, the teaching of Zoroaster. That teaching, in its true essence, lay for centuries in a kind of trance ; the Magi were the guardians of the sleeping form of it ; the real awakening has taken place in times comparatively modern.

Without seeking exactly to determine the date at which the Magi of Media began to be religious teachers, the time of their largest influence and purest teaching must have been coincident with the time of the greatest sway of the Median empire, that is during the seventh century and the early part of the sixth century before the Christian era. During some part of that time their missionaries went to Babylon ; and during some part of that time the greatest of their missionaries, Zoroaster, went from Media to the east. What then, irrespectively of Zoroaster, was the Magian teaching ?

In the after ages, when they had declined from their first virtue, it appears as a kind of worship of the elements, mingled with certain fragments of polytheism, derived from the old Aryan religion. But we should judge them unjustly if we held that this was the character of the primary Magian teaching. The Magi of Babylon had never any of those unworthy eccentricities into which the Magi of Media fell in the time of their decay, and of which the best known (and most enduring) has been their habit of exposing their dead to be devoured by birds ; and therefore we must infer that the original Magi of Media had not these eccentricities either.

The primary doctrine of the Magi of Media was evidently a kind of pantheism, exemplified to us in many of the later Yasnas, from which I will quote one passage :

Yea, we worship the Creator Ahura Mazda and the Fire, Ahura Mazda's son, and the good waters which are Mazda-made and holy, and the resplendent sun of the swift horses, and the moon with the seed of cattle in his beams ; and we worship the star Tistrya<sup>1</sup>, the lustrous and glorious ; and we worship the soul of the Kine of blessed endowment, and its Creator Ahura Mazda ; and we worship Mithra<sup>2</sup> of the wide pastures and Sraosha (Obedience) the blessed, and Rashnu<sup>2</sup> the most just, and the good, heroic, beautiful Fravashis of the saints, and the Blow-of-Victory Ahura-given. And we worship Râman-Hvâstra<sup>2</sup>, and the bounteous Wind of blessed gift, and its Creator Ahura Mazda, and the good Mazdayasnian Religion, and the good Blessedness and Arstât<sup>2</sup>. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxxi. p. 256.

<sup>1</sup> Generally held to be Sirius.

<sup>2</sup> Mithra is the heavenly light ; Rashnu is the Genius of Truthfulness ; Râman-Hvâstra is the Genius that gives good abodes and good pastures ; Arstât is Truthfulness.

Now, I am not saying that that passage entirely coincides with the original doctrine of the Magi ; for the mention of Ahura Mazda shows in it the influence of Zoroaster. But it is characteristic, in that it assembles together all the things of noble and worthy repute, whatever the world contains, and presents them together, not separately, to be worshipped by men. In another of these Yasnas it is said, "we worship all good men and good women" ; and it is sometimes added, all good men and good women who have suffered and struggled for the faith. It is a matter of course, that when men were bidden to worship such an assemblage of noble and excellent, but diverse, beings, they should end by isolating one or more of those beings as most excellent, and worship these in a special manner ; and thus pantheism would slide into polytheism. Hence we find the Magi of Babylon worshipping the Sun ; and from the Yasts, which are the latest part of the Avesta (though probably embodying passages from old Aryan hymns, which would be quite early) we see that the Magi of Media, in the fourth century before Christ, had succumbed to a distinct polytheism. But the earliest Magian teaching was clearly a revolt against the old Aryan polytheism, and especially against idolatry. We learn from Herodotus (I. 131-132) that the Persians (and with the Persians he must include the Medes) had neither temples nor altars nor images ; but that they went to the highest peaks of the mountains, and there offered their sacrifices. Herodotus wrote in the latter part of the fifth century before Christ, when the Magian teaching had been long in existence ; and he tells us that the Persians accounted it unlawful to offer a sacrifice unless one of the Magi was present and chanted a hymn concerning the gods. Evidently then the Persian worship of which Herodotus speaks was a worship according to the Magian religion. Must we not infer that it was from the Magi that the Persians learnt to abstain from using temples, altars and images ? From whom else could the Persians have learned this ? The nations all round Iran, with no exception that we know, used temples, altars and images : thus did the Greeks, the Phœnicians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians and (when they had once settled down) the Hindus<sup>1</sup>. Is it not plain that it was the influence of the Magi which led the Persians not to use these common adjuncts of religious worship ? Moreover, it is

<sup>1</sup> See, in the second chapter of the present work (p. 44) the passage quoted by Professor Macdonell from the Rig-Veda, mentioning an idol ; and the reference to the Brâhmanas.



plain why the influence of the Magi should tend this way. They were directing the thoughts of worshippers, not to deities imaginatively described, but to realities, behind which a divine spirit was conceived to lie. Just as all good men and good women had their Fravashis, or eternal spiritual representatives, so all the great and wonderful things of the visible universe had the divinity behind them, and that divinity was to be worshipped. This was a true advance on the Aryan polytheism; and besides its more intrinsic rationality, we may well believe that the religious rites, elaborate and turbulent, which the Aryan priesthood encouraged, offended the Magi, who were more spiritually minded; so that on all grounds it was natural for the Magi to urge the abandonment of temples and altars and images, and we must believe that it was they who produced this amendment in the religion of the Aryan Medes and Persians.

But yet, as the Magi held that the path to knowledge of the divinity lay through the visible universe, in which there were many objects, some more and some less splendid and wonderful, there would be a tendency to select some of these objects as more worthy of worship than others, and thus the way back again to polytheism was not shut out by the Magian system. It was shut out by Zoroaster; but Zoroaster was too high even for the Magi properly to comprehend him. Hence we find the Magi of Babylon worshipping the Sun; and the Magi of Media paid special regard to the element of Fire, and in a sort of way they made an idol of Fire; and their whole attitude towards Fire, Earth, Water, was in the end not rational. But they began rationally and devoutly; and though we must not say that Zoroaster's teaching was exactly the development of the teaching of the Magi, for it sprang from a purer and more native source than that from which the teaching of the Magi sprang, still it lay much nearer to the teaching of the Magi than it did to the teaching of the old Aryan religion. The Magian religion was intermediate between the Aryan religion and Zoroaster; in recognising this, we have the surest key to the whole subject which is at present obtainable.

Let me say, at this point, that I agree with Professor Moulton in holding that the Magi were not Aryans, not of the ruling race in Media; this is what is implied by Darius, when in his Behistun inscription he calls Auramazda<sup>1</sup> "the god of the Aryans"; he means to say that he had more right to worship Auramazda than

<sup>1</sup> Auramazda is the Persian, Ahura Mazda the Median form of the name.

his enemies, the Magi, had. (Yet surely Zoroaster, even if he borrowed the name from the Aryans, had made the right to use it his own.) The Magi, though not of the ruling race, were evidently of great consequence and repute; nor have we any reason to say that hatred was felt towards them as long as the Median empire lasted; it was afterwards that that hatred came. Of course, they would not be popular with the Aryan priesthood.

Such then were the Magi; but before I pursue their career onwards it will be well to show how Zoroaster, coming from the Magi, treated that critical point, the worship of Fire and of the luminaries of heaven. He could not leave the teaching of his youth, in which Fire had been held to be divine, quite without recognition; and all through the Gâthas Fire is spoken of as a kind of sacramental sign of deity; as for instance in such phrases as these: "the felicity that is with the heavenly lights" (*Yasna* xxx. 1); "the award thou givest by thy Spirit and thy Fire" (*Yasna* xxxi. 3); "thy Fire, O Ahura, that is mighty through Right" (*Yasna* xxxiv. 4). But he never approaches in the least degree to the worship of Fire in itself, and his attitude towards all created things is well shown in the following verses (*Yasna* xliv. 3, 4):

This I ask thee, tell me truly, Ahura, Who is by generation the Father of Right, at the first? Who determined the path of sun and stars? Who is it by whom the moon waxes and wanes again? This, O Mazdah, and yet more, I am fain to know.

This I ask thee, tell me truly, Ahura, Who upheld the earth beneath and the firmament from falling? Who the waters and the plants? Who yoked swiftness to winds and clouds? Who is, O Mazdah, creator of Good Thought?

And presently he answers: "I strive to recognise by these things thee, O Mazdah, creator of all things through the holy spirit."

Zoroaster, then, surpassed his own tribe, the Magi; and the Magi, when their hour of need came, fully knew and acknowledged this. What they thought of him in his lifetime, there is no record to say; but we have no reason to think that they were ever adverse to him. They were never pure monotheists, as he was; but there was nothing in the way of honouring him, which they could do, which they left undone. There is an interesting point in their history to which I may here refer; an old king Husravah, a very warlike king, who must be a Median king (for it is said of him very frequently<sup>1</sup> that he was the first who united the Aryan nations

<sup>1</sup> In the Yasts. Our information about this king comes from combining what we read of him in the Yasts with what we read in the Pahlavi writings.



together, which did not happen before the Median empire began, and did happen under that empire), is also said to have destroyed the idol temples near lake Kaêkasta, which is what is now called lake Urumiah in Armenia. (This last fact is stated in the Pahlavi writings, where his name appears as Khûsrôb.) Now that destruction must have been effected by the counsel of the Magi; but it is plain from the Behistun inscription that the Aryan temples in Media were not destroyed in the reign of king Husravah; and we can well understand that the Aryan priests would have an influence in the centre of the Median empire which they would not have in the outskirts of that empire. I may add that the account in Herodotus, i. 102, does perhaps justify us in identifying king Husravah with the second king of the Median empire, Phraortes.

It is time now to ask: What are we to hold, as near as we can tell, to have been the date of Zoroaster? or, to put a kindred question, what was the date of Vistâspa, the king to whose help Zoroaster, and the teaching of Zoroaster, owed so much? The traditional account, which we find in the Pahlavi texts, gives the date of "the coming of the religion" (or in other words the conversion of king Vistâspa by Zoroaster) either as 300 years before the conquest of the Persian empire by Alexander of Macedon, or (in Bundahis, xxxiv.), with a slight difference from the former account, 272 years before the death of Alexander. As Alexander's victory at Arbela was in 331 B.C., and Alexander's death in 323 B.C., these statements imply that the conversion of Vistâspa took place either in 631 B.C. or in 595 B.C. But the Pahlavi texts are very uncertain authorities in the matter of dates; and though we cannot ignore them, we must not reckon them to be our most important guides. What, then, is our most important guide? To myself, the tone of the Behistun inscription appears to be that piece of evidence which is hardest to overthrow, and which as a matter of fact has not been overthrown by any other piece of evidence now in the field. As to the Behistun inscription in all its bearings, I must give an account of that later on; I am now treating it simply as a piece of composition of the famous king Darius, and as showing the mind of Darius. For the present it is enough to say that it is the commemoration, written by Darius himself, of that great series of victories by which he, in the year 521 B.C. or shortly afterwards, won for himself the royal authority over the whole extent of the Persian empire, which had been thrown into disorder, first by the misrule of

Cambyzes, and next by the treacherous rebellion of the Magi—that first sin of the Magi, the seed of many calamities in the after time.

Most cordially do I agree with Meyer and Geldner and Moulton, that the Behistun inscription shows Darius to have been an ardent follower of Zoroastrianism ; and with the explanation<sup>1</sup>, by Professor Moulton, of the difficulties which have been thought to lie against the belief that this was the case. When I say, however, that Darius was an ardent follower of Zoroastrianism, I do not exactly mean that he was an ardent follower of Zoroaster. There is a difference between the two propositions which I am putting side by side. In all the long Behistun inscription, Darius never mentions Zoroaster ; what a contrast to the profuse mention of Zoroaster's name in the Later Avesta, written by the Magi ! Ought not Darius to have at least shown that he knew the name of that teacher to whom he was so much indebted ? if not in the Behistun inscription, at any rate in the inscription on his own tomb, which still exists ? But he never does. What is the explanation ?

The explanation, and the sufficient explanation, of the silence of Darius, is that Zoroaster had been one of the Magi, the enemies whom Darius had just subdued. It is the counterpart of that silence which the Avesta, and the Pahlavi texts too, preserve towards Darius himself ; they ignore him utterly. I need add no more to this most natural reason for a silence which in itself might puzzle us ; and I must now call attention to the phrases by which the Zoroastrianism of Darius is shown to us.

In all heathen literature, I feel sure that there is no parallel to the extraordinary insistence of Darius, from beginning to end of the Behistun inscription, on his indebtedness to Auramazda, his devotion to Auramazda. Take one example :

Thus saith Darius, the king : Auramazda hath granted unto me this empire. Auramazda brought me help, until I gained this empire ; by the grace of Auramazda do I hold this empire.

Elsewhere he says, in relation to one of the arduous conflicts in which he was engaged : “I prayed to Auramazda ; Auramazda brought me help.” The recurrence of these phrases is incessant. He does indeed barely recognise other deities ; this much he does allow to the feeling of his own race, the Aryans ; but Auramazda alone has his heart. Can we imagine a characteristic that more recalls the Gâthas ? Scarcely less does his scorn of lying recall

<sup>1</sup> See Moulton's *Early Zoroastrianism*, pp. 48-50, 131, 136, 431-433.



the Gâthas. In the Gâthas, "the Lie" is the brief symbol whereby the enemy is denoted. Now hear Darius :

Thus saith Darius, the king : Thou who mayest be king hereafter, beware of lies : the man who is a liar, destroy him utterly, if thou think-est, "thereby shall my land remain whole."...

Whosoever shall read this inscription hereafter, let that which I have done be believed ; thou shalt not hold it to be lies. Thus saith Darius, the king : I call Auramazda to witness that it is true and not lies ; all of it have I done.

Moreover, whenever he speaks of one of the false pretenders to royalty, he says of him briefly, "he lied."

Whence comes this very clear and remarkable resemblance of the utterance of Darius to the utterances of Zoroaster in the Gâthas ? There may, possibly, have been a copy of the Gâthas in the palace of Darius ; but if there was, we should have to ask how it came there. In any case a natural explanation is given us, if the Vistâspa, whom from the Gâthas we know to have been the protector of Zoroaster, and the promoter of Zoroaster's cause, was the same as that other Vistâspa, whom Darius mentions in the Behistun inscription as his own father<sup>1</sup>. If this was the case, then we perceive that, with very slight knowledge of Zoroaster personally, and probably with very little sense of the need of gratitude to him, Darius would have drunk in from his childhood the maxims of Zoroaster ; his own father would have been the intermediary. That is a satisfactory account of the resemblance which I am bringing forward ; and if we remember how very soon the sincerest religious feeling changes its aspect, as it is handed down from generation to generation, I do not think we shall find any other account that satisfies the conditions. I think too that this account, though not absolutely in accord with the date implied by the Pahlavi texts to which I referred above, is not so far different from that testimony as to occasion any objection on that ground. I am supposing that what the Pahlavi texts call "the coming of the religion," that is the conversion of king Vistâspa by Zoroaster, took place about 570 B.C. And now let me go back to the history of the Magi.

All Media, and the Magi no doubt among other Medes, had been thrown into great disorder by an invasion of the wild northern tribes (called in the inscriptions the Ummum-Manda) which took place in the last quarter of the seventh century before

<sup>1</sup> This identification is much questioned. It was made by Ammianus Marcellinus, the eminent historian of the fourth century A.D. ; who, from his birth at Antioch and his military journeys in the east, was likely to have real knowledge of Zoroastrian tradition. I will say more about it in an Appendix to this chapter.

Christ ; and as we now know from the inscriptions that Astyages, who used to be called the last Median king, and who became king in 594 B.C. was really one of these Ummum-Manda, it is possible that the disorder still in some degree continued all through the first forty years of the sixth century. Zoroaster, in the east of Iran, would for the present be out of the field of this disorder ; and his success in his own field was evidently great. That Vistâspa was a young man at the time of his conversion is probable from the Vistâsp Yast (which not only speaks of him as young, but implies that he had at that time no children) ; some loose expressions in the Pahlavi texts, which imply that he was then middle-aged, need not be regarded. Briefly let me mention the end of Zoroaster, as it is handed down to us. The Iranian tradition is fairly unanimous that he was slain, when over seventy-seven years old, by a Turanian ; and there is also evidence, which though late is not to be despised, that he was slain in a war caused by an invasion of the northern (or Turanian) tribes, after they had taken the city of Balkh, the capital of Bactria, where Zoroaster then was. The date of this event would seem to have been after, rather than before, 540 B.C.

But after the death of Zoroaster, I have to narrate the fall of the Magi ; their fall in spiritual worth, as well as in outward fortune. Outward misfortune came upon them first, and they shrank under it. What happened was this. Media, as I have said, was probably weakened by the northern invasion ; but the conquest of Media by Cyrus, king of Elam, which took place in 559 B.C., produced a direr humiliation. That Cyrus was a Zoroastrian in any exclusive sense, it is no longer possible to believe, since the discovery of his Cylinder Inscription, in which, after conquering Babylon, he records his devotion to Marduk, the Babylonian deity, without any mention of Ahura Mazda, or Auramazda, at all. We must not however argue that because Cyrus, a politic ruler, worshipped Marduk at Babylon, he would therefore not worship Ahura Mazda in Iran, with which he was so much more intimately connected by birth and natural associations ; in all probability he did so, though we cannot regard him as devoted in heart and soul to Ahura Mazda. Neither, of course, can we account Cambyses, the madly despotic son of Cyrus, as in any true sense the worshipper of that God to whom Zoroaster addressed his fervent prayers. Yet we have evidence, which it is impossible to resist, that Cambyses was in a certain sense a fanatic follower, probably of Zoroaster, certainly of the Magi.



We must infer this from the fact of which we are informed in the Aramaic papyri recently discovered near Assuan in Egypt, that Cambyses, when he destroyed the other temples round that place, left the Jewish temple unharmed. Why should Cambyses have drawn this distinction, except because the Jewish temple had no idol in it? That would be in accordance with the principles of Magianism; and certainly we must suppose that in 530 B.C. Magi were abundant in Iran, and that they had on the whole the predominance over the ancient Aryan religion. Cambyses then would have every opportunity of falling under their influence, and there can be little doubt that he did so. This did not imply that they could influence him for good; his whole life showed a recklessness of conduct which has seldom been surpassed. But in a certain sense Cambyses followed the Magi, in the superficialities of religion; and the moment was one when the Magi of Media were singularly liable to temptation. They had lost the power which they possessed under the Median kings of the seventh century, for those Median kings no longer existed; and they looked for power wherever they could find it. This it was which made them now seize the great name of Zarathustra, who had acquired such authority far outside the bounds of Media; henceforth, without the least conscious insincerity, they professed a profound allegiance to him, in their prayers, in their legends, in their legislation. But henceforth, also, they attached themselves to the Persian kings, unless (as the event showed) there was a chance of rebelling against those kings successfully; and then they rebelled. This dangerous strain of temperament soon worked evil. It is probable that we must attribute to the Magi that sinister counsel which Herodotus attributes to the royal judges of Persia, when Cambyses asked whether he might lawfully marry his sister; the answer was, that they (the judges or more probably the Magi) found no law authorising marriage with a sister, but that they did find a law authorising the king of Persia to do whatever he pleased! From this origin, it would seem, came that Magian custom of regarding marriage with sisters (nay even with mothers and daughters) a virtuous act. There is some doubt how far the prevalence of this custom reached; but as to its existence among the followers of the Magi in ancient times there seems no doubt.<sup>1</sup> If I have done injustice to the Magi in supposing that their complaisance to Cambyses

<sup>1</sup> The learned essay of E. W. West (Appendix III. in volume XVIII. of *Sacred Books of the East*) is the most complete and impartial investigation existing on this subject.

first originated this custom (and one must not press too strongly an uncertain charge), at all events the act of Cambyses, for some reason taken up by the Magi, appears the most likely origin of it.

The Magi, it is probable, flattered Cambyses; it is certain that they rebelled against him. His unpopularity gave them the opportunity; and their minds were seething with discontent and ambition; and lastly, his secret murder of his brother Smerdis enabled them to induce one of their own number to personate Smerdis, so that they could rebel professedly in his cause. The false Smerdis soon acquired a great following; the Medes, mindful of their lost sovereignty, backed him up; and the Magi showed their religious animus by destroying many temples in Media, no doubt those of the old Aryan religion. Cambyses, who was in Egypt, set out to return to put down the rebellion; but that return was never accomplished. The Behistun inscription tells us that he slew himself; Herodotus says that his death was the result of an accident, the point of his sword piercing his thigh as he mounted his horse; in any case he died.

It would seem that at first the bold acts of the Magi stunned the Persian nobility, for we read in Herodotus (III. 67) that the false Smerdis ventured to promise his subjects freedom from liability to military service, and from taxation, for the space of three years: on the other hand, he slew those who had known the true Smerdis, in order that the truth might not be discovered.

But that so treacherous an act, in the end failed, can occasion us neither surprise nor regret. After eight months Darius, who appears to have been recognised as the representative of the Achæmenian family, with the help of his friends slew the false Magian and those who were supporting him; and the Persians, taking heart from the death of their chief foe, gathered in numbers and slew all the Magi on whom they could lay their hands, an event afterwards commemorated by the Persians in the annual festival of the Magophonia, or slaughter of the Magi.

But the result of this victory was, at first, far from being the attainment of peace. All over the Persian empire men had hoped, it would seem, that the reign of the Great King was over, and that every nation was free again; and all over the Persian empire pretenders sprang up, declaring that they were legitimate sovereigns. Then did the genius of Darius assert itself. Whatever the force of the subject nations, the superior discipline belonged to the Persians; and Darius appealed not in vain to



his ministers, his generals, in every quarter. Among those generals, we are interested to hear, was his father Vistâspa, who was governing in Parthia<sup>1</sup>. It is clear that naturally Vistâspa rather than his son Darius would have been the monarch of the Persian empire, the king of kings ; but Vistâspa, on the reckoning which I have followed, would be nearly seventy years of age ; and no doubt he was quite willing to leave this most strenuous warfare to his vigorous son. Father and son worked loyally together, and I cannot but think that this is some evidence that there was a religious tie, as well as a natural tie, between them. Not only in Parthia, but everywhere, were the rebels subdued, and speedily. It cannot be said that Darius was merciful, in his victory, to the leaders of the rebels ; but cruelty was in those days hardly reckoned as a vice, and even in the Gâthas it is impossible to say that mercy to enemies is inculcated as a virtue, much less as a duty.

A great man we must acknowledge Darius to have been, and it was not an unworthy thing of him to commemorate his victory in the way in which he did commemorate it. On the face of a precipice, inaccessible to the ordinary wayfarer, high up on the road between Babylonia and the cities of Media, he caused to be carved in three languages that inscription which, from the name of the place, is called the Behistun inscription ; to which I have so often referred in the present chapter. There may still be seen the arrow-like letters which to the skilled student reveal the names of Darius himself, his ancestors and his family, his enemies in all the provinces where he had enemies, his friends and his servants, the punishments of his chief enemies, and many moral reflections, some of which I have quoted above, and reiterated expressions of religious trust ; and also his restoration of the shrines which the Magi had destroyed, and which Darius now restored, as we must suppose, because they belonged to the Aryan race, the race of nobles ; not because Darius agreed with the worship which they represented. The whole inscription, in spite of its repetitions, has a nervous conciseness, indicating a strong will and a commanding character.

This great inscription was first copied in the year 1835 by a young English officer, afterwards known as Sir Henry Rawlinson ; who was let down by a basket from the top of the rock, and, not without risk of life, took squeezes of the inscriptions ; and who afterwards had the principal share in interpreting them. Other

<sup>1</sup> We know this on the indisputable authority of the Behistun inscription.

scholars have surveyed the rock from below ; but the American professor Williams Jackson is the only one who has imitated Rawlinson's feat, and seen the inscription at close quarters, and taken squeezes from it.

The general history of Darius as a king does not concern the present chapter ; but one more point must be mentioned relating to him ; namely, that he was the institutor of the Calendar which, handed down from age to age, is at this day used by the Persian Parsis. The evidence for this fact is too complex to be given in the present chapter ; it was first perceived, with great acuteness, by E. W. West, whose disquisition on the subject will be found on pages xlii-xlvii of his Introduction, in vol. XLVII. of the *Sacred Books of the East*, and the proof has been further elaborated by Professor Moulton, on pages 431-434 of *Early Zoroastrianism*, who also remarks how entirely the names of the months in the Calendar suit the character of Darius as "a genuine and earnest follower of Zarathushtra."

But I must leave Darius ; it is with the Magi, the continuators of the religion of Zoroaster, that I am now concerned. They had failed, and failed deservedly, in their attempt to win political supremacy in Iran ; they were reduced to the exercise of religious authority, if they could maintain even that ; and with the hatred of the Persians and the memory of their own recent failure against them, it was difficult to maintain religious authority. The name of Zarathustra doubtless helped them greatly. Zoroaster had won the deep respect of Aryan kings ; he had not been implicated in any failure, in any dishonour ; the Magi could take his name as their title to honour, and they did so, in almost every production of their pen. Of their own name they were, alas, not undeservedly ashamed ; their own name occurs only once in the whole Avesta, and there, characteristically enough, it occurs in the phrase, "one who hates the Magi." We must not blame the Magi if something artificial, something not quite disinterested, mingled with their reverence for Zoroaster. They had some true reverence for him, as I showed in the quotation which I made from the Farvardin Yast.

More to be blamed were the Magi for the superstitions by which they tried to increase their religious authority. They knew the curious principle that religious authority acquires weight with the generality of men, not so much by the good which it can be shown to have effected (for to determine this is a delicate and difficult matter), but by the demands which



it makes, concerning which there need be no doubt at all. From this time forth therefore the Magi insisted, and insisted more and more as time went on, on those prohibitions as to burying or burning dead bodies, which are perhaps the best known thing connected with the Parsi religion at the present day ; so much more easy is it to remember a quaint superstition than a noble religious example ! In the time of Herodotus, the Magi had not succeeded in inducing the Persians to refrain from burying the dead. They themselves, and doubtless their ardent adherents, exposed their dead to be eaten by birds.

Then too, the principle that, in the things which we see and know, a good spirit and a bad spirit are at war together, and produce good and bad fruits respectively, this, which Zoroaster had seen in experience, the Magi took as an abstract principle, and marvellous indeed were the results which they deduced from it ! All living creatures were divided into the creatures of Ahura Mazda, and the creatures of Angra Mainyu or Ahriman. The reason of the selection, in either case, was obscure ; the result was clear in the extreme. The hedgehog was one of the creatures of Ahura Mazda ; if you killed a hedgehog, purification from such a sin was not to be had by a punishment less than a thousand stripes. (Darmesteter has suggested, probably with truth, that a way was eventually found to commute the stripes for a money payment.) The tortoise was a creature of Angra Mainyu ; if you killed a tortoise, all your sins of thought, word, and deed were instantaneously forgiven. With follies like this is the greater part of the Vendîdâd filled. Could a great religion sink lower ? Yet even the Vendîdâd has redeeming parts ; if the first four Fargards and the last four Fargards alone had been preserved, we should not have thought so badly of it. The intermediate Fargards are those which sink it into the depths. But let me by preference quote one of the redeeming passages : here is one from the third *Fargard* (23-29) :

O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One ! Who is the fourth who rejoices the earth with greatest joy ?

Ahura Mazda answered : It is he who cultivates most corn, grass, and fruit, O Spitama Zarathustra ! who waters ground that is dry, or dries ground that is too wet. Unhappy is the land that has long lain unsown with the seed of the sower and wants a good husbandman, like a well-shapen maiden who has long gone childless and wants a good husband. He who would till the earth, O Spitama Zarathustra ! with the left arm and the right, with the right arm and the left, unto him will she bring forth plenty, like a loving bride on her bed unto her beloved : the bride will bring forth children, the earth will bring forth plenty of fruit.

He who would till the earth, O Spitama Zarathustra ! with the left arm and the right, with the right arm and the left, unto him thus says the Earth : O thou man ! who dost till me with the left arm and the right, with the right arm and the left, hither shall people ever come and beg for bread, here shall I ever go on bearing, bringing forth all manner of food, bringing forth profusion of corn. He who does not till the earth, O Spitama Zarathustra ! with the left arm and the right, with the right arm and the left, unto him thus says the Earth : O thou man ! who dost not till me with the left arm and the right, with the right arm and the left, ever shalt thou stand at the door of the stranger, among those who beg for bread ; ever shalt thou wait there for the refuse that is brought unto thee, brought by those that have profusion of wealth. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. iv. pp. 28, 29.

The nobler spirit both of the Magi, and of Zoroaster, is well exemplified in that passage ; nor is it the only instance of that spirit in the Vendîdâd ; but when the whole book is considered, such a passage is the exception, and not the rule.

The Vendîdâd was one of twenty-one books (or Nasks, as they were called) in which the laws and maxims of the Zoroastrian religion were contained in the fourth century before Christ (as well as we can tell) ; most of them have perished, but the topics dealt with in them are more or less preserved to us in the Dînkard, one of the principal Pahlavi writings (translated by E. W. West : this part of the Dînkard will be found in vol. xxxvii. of *Sacred Books of the East*).

I have written in this chapter of the Gâthas, of the later Yasnas (which have something of the features of a liturgy), and of the Vendîdâd : the Yasts are the chief remaining part of the Avesta, and I must say something more about them. That the Yasts, in their present form, were the composition of the Magi (like all the later Avesta) is probable ; but they bear strong traces of the old Aryan religion ; they evince to us, what otherwise we should not have known, the incessant struggle of that religion to enter within the borders of Magianism, to dispossess Magianism and claim the ground for itself. The Yasts are most graceful, picturesque productions ; in some ways they remind one of the Homeric hymns ; but they have less narrative, more fervour ; something of the ethical glow of the original Magianism accepts into its embraces the story-telling disposition of the Aryan bard. It can hardly be doubted that the Yasts show us the Magian priesthood yielding before the allurements of the great men of Persia, and especially of the kings of Persia, and preferring the ornaments of cultivated life to those sentiments of religion with which even the Magi, much more Zoroaster,



had begun. Let me quote, as perhaps the most extreme instance of a polytheism which would gladly keep itself under a veil, but cannot, part of the description of the famous goddess Ardvi Sura Anâhita from the fifth *Yast*:

Ardvi Sura Anâhita, who stands carried forth in the shape of a maid, fair of body, most strong, tall-formed, high-girded, pure, nobly born of a glorious race.... Upon her head Ardvi Sura Anâhita bound a golden crown, with a hundred stars, with eight rays.... She is clothed with garments of beaver, Ardvi Sura Anâhita; with the skin of thirty beavers of those that bear four young ones, that are the finest kind of beavers.... Here, O good most beneficent Ardvi Sura Anâhita! I beg of thee this favour, that I, fully blessed, may conquer large kingdoms, rich in horses, with high tributes, with snorting horses, sounding chariots, flashing swords, rich in raiments, etc. *Ibid.* vol. XXIII. pp. 82, 83.

Do we not read in the last sentence the very inmost sentiment of a Persian despot—perhaps of Artaxerxes Mnemon himself<sup>1</sup>? But there is rather an unusual absence of the moral element in the *Yast* from which the above extract is made; much more of it would be found in the *Mihir Yast* or the *Farvardîn Yast*, or some others. Yet on the whole, the morality of the *Yasts* is below their poetry.

I do not doubt that nearly the whole of the *Vendîdâd* and the *Yasts* were written under the Achæmenian dynasty, and in the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ; something of the *Yasts* may be drawn from ancient Aryan poetry, and something of the *Vendîdâd* may have been added in Sassanian times, with a view to special heresies then prevalent; but on the whole these two books show the decadence of Persia after the time of the great Darius; they show the absence of any guiding influence over the inmost being of men. The elements of good that were in them had little influence, and Persia hastened to ruin.

The crash came when Alexander mounted the throne of Macedon. There was no strength in the Persian empire to resist that great warrior, when he overran, and took possession of, that empire; Greeks began to occupy large Persian provinces; the Zoroastrian religion and the Magi sank into obscurity. From the year 331 B.C., when the victory of Arbela gave the whole of the Persian empire into the hands of Alexander, the Zoroastrian religion lay buried, seemingly dead, for the best part of four centuries. Then, when the phalanx of Macedon and the legion

<sup>1</sup> We know from Berosus that Artaxerxes Mnemon was the first who caused an image of Anâhita to be made; and Professor Moulton justly argues that the description in this *Yast* was taken from the image; from whence the date of the composition of the *Yast* may be inferred.

of Rome had alike receded from those eastern territories, the Zoroastrian religion began to revive again; slowly under the Parthians at first; but from 226 B.C. onwards, for four centuries, under the native Persian rule of the Sassanians. In this revived state it was probably purer and better than it had been under the Persian kings of the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ; yet still with too many superstitious and feeble elements clinging to it for it to be able to renovate mankind.

Lastly, in the seventh century of our era, there fell upon Persia the hurricane of Mohammedan conquest, and the adherents of Zoroastrianism generally succumbed to the storm. The small community of scholars and merchants who have retained their ancient faith, and in a purified form, those named the Parsis, deserve our respect; some great elements of an ancient history, and of pure feeling, survive in them; and these are valuable, though they have not been able to accomplish that great work, the conversion of the world, which is the crown of all religion.

Let me in conclusion quote from one of the Pahlavi writings a strain of feeling which is found in briefer form in the Avesta, both in the Vendidad and in the Yasts—a recurrent strain which exhibits the Zoroastrian religion at its best:

When a soul of the righteous passes upon that bridge [the supernatural bridge to heaven, which the wicked cannot cross] the width of the bridge becomes as it were a furlong, and the righteous soul passes over with the cooperation of Srôsh the righteous. And his own deeds of a virtuous kind come to meet him in the form of a maiden, who is handsomer and better than every maiden in the world.

And the righteous soul speaks thus: "Who mayest thou be, that a maiden who is handsomer and better than thee was never seen by me in the worldly existence?"

In reply that maiden form responds thus: "I am no maiden, but I am thy virtuous deeds, thou youth who art well thinking, well speaking, well doing, and of good religion! For when thou sawest in the world him who performed demon-worship, then thou hast sat down, and thy performance was the worship of the sacred beings. And when it was seen by thee that there was any one who caused oppression and plunder, and distressed or scorned a good person, and acquired wealth by crime, then thou keptest back from the creatures their own risk of oppression and plunder; the good person was also thought of by thee, and lodging and entertainment provided; and alms were given by thee to him who came forth from near and him, too, who was from afar; and wealth which was due to honesty was acquired by thee. And when thou sawest him who practised false justice and taking of bribes, and false evidence was given by him, then thou hast sat down, and the recitation of truth and virtue was uttered by thee. I am this of thine, the good thoughts, the good



words, and the good deeds which were thought and spoken and done by thee. For when I have become commendable, I am then made altogether more commendable by thee; when I have become precious I am then made altogether still more precious by thee; and when I have become glorious, I am then made altogether still more glorious by thee."

And when he walks onwards from there, a sweet-scented breeze comes then to meet him, which is more fragrant than all perfume. The soul of the righteous inquires of Srôsh thus: "What breeze is this, that never in the world so fragrant a breeze came into contact with me?"

Then Srôsh, the righteous, replies to that righteous soul thus: "This breeze is from heaven, which is so fragrant."

Afterwards, on his march, the first step is set on the place of good thoughts, the second on that of good words, the third on that of good deeds, and the fourth step reaches up into the endless light which is all-radiant. And angels and archangels of every description come to meet him, and ask tidings from him thus: "How hast thou come, from that which is a perishable, fearful, and very miserable existence, to this which is an imperishable existence, that is undisturbed, thou youth who art well thinking, well speaking, well doing, and of good religion?"

Then Aûharmazd, the Lord, speaks thus: "Ask ye from him no tidings; for he has parted from that which was a precious body, and has come by that which is a fearful road. And bring ye unto him the most agreeable of eatables, that which is the midspring butter, so that he may rest his soul from that bridge of the three nights, unto which he came from Astôvidâd and the remaining demons; and seat him upon an all-embellished throne."

As it is declared that "Unto the righteous man and woman, after passing away, they bring food of the most agreeable of eatables—the food of the angels of the spiritual existences—that which is the midspring butter; and they seat him down upon an all-embellished throne. For ever and everlasting they remain in all glory with the angels of the spiritual existences everlastingly." *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxiv. pp. 18–22. (The meaning of the name of the work from which this extract is taken is *Opinions of the Spirit of Wisdom*.)

Let us smile, if we will, at the "midspring butter"; but has a religion, however imperfect, existed in vain, which has been able to hand down to all posterity such a picture of the reward of a virtuous soul?

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV

### ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF VISTÂSPA, THE ROYAL CONVERT OF ZOROASTER, WITH VISTÂSPA THE FATHER OF DARIUS

THIS identification would be impossible if Zoroaster lived, as some of the Greeks thought, 5000 years before the Trojan war. But this curious Greek error has been well explained by Professor Williams Jackson (*Zoroaster*, p. 152); the Greeks mistook what the Persians told them of the *fravashi*, or spiritual essence,

of Zoroaster, for a statement regarding his bodily existence. But it is argued, that if Zoroaster had lived in the sixth century B.C., the Greeks must have known his period. This argument would be sound, had Zoroaster been a Persian; but the Persians, though accepting the Magi as their priests, cared little for any individual Magian; hence it was that they did not mention Zoroaster's name to Herodotus.

Modern critics do not realise what a blank void was caused in the historical consciousness of the Magi, by reason of their rebellion against the Persians, and their defeat by Darius. This is why the Avesta never mentions Darius or his successors on the Persian throne. A silence caused by shame has been misinterpreted as if all that preceded this silence were ancient and legendary.

Again, the language of the Gâthas has certain special resemblances to the language of the Rig-Veda, a book probably of the second millennium B.C.; whence it is argued that the Gâthas date not very far from the second millennium B.C. But Professor Moulton tells us (*Early Religious Poetry of Persia*, p. 4) that these two languages differ in their general character as much as Dutch and English; a difference which must have taken many centuries to accomplish. The special resemblances may be accounted for by the Gâthas having been written in eastern Iran, comparatively near India. I may remark that when so excellent a scholar as E. W. West places the conversion of Vistâspa at the date 618 B.C. (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XLVII. p. xxx), it can hardly, on linguistic grounds, be thought impossible for it to have taken place in 570 B.C.

Lastly, the father of the Zoroastrian Vistâspa is called in the Avesta Aurvat-âspa (*Aban Yast*, 105); in the Pahlavi writings by the equivalent name Lôhrâsp or Lôharâsp. Now Darius, in the Behistun inscription, after mentioning his own father Vistâspa, says that the father of Vistâspa was Arshâma. Hence it is argued, that the two Vistâspas, having different fathers, must be different men. But (not to speak of other explanations) this argument overlooks the fact that Darius, in tracing his own descent from Achæmenid kings, would almost certainly have omitted females who were in the direct line; see a later instance of this given by West (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. v. p. xix). Thus Arshâma, if he were the maternal grandfather of Vistâspa, would be called his father; and this would take away the difficulty.

The identification of the two Vistâspas receives some support from Pliny; still more from the sober narrative in *Dinkard* v. i. 2-6; iv. 8, 9, according to which Lôharâsp, the father of the Zoroastrian Vistâspa, went as a subordinate of Nebuchadnezzar to the siege of Jerusalem (the siege in 598 B.C. must be the one intended).

I think, therefore, that the identification stands.



## CHAPTER V

### ANCIENT RELIGION : CHINA AND JAPAN

So remote, until the latter half of the nineteenth century, were China and Japan from the spiritual movements of Europe and western Asia, that it may seem to some people that this part of the earth ought to be regarded as a separate province, and not to form part of the subject of a work which necessarily centres in the western nations. But the importance of China and Japan, from the moral and religious no less than from the material point of view, is undeniable ; and to omit them from the present work would leave a sad lacuna. I must needs take them in ; and China, the more ancient, comes first.

The history of China is eloquent to us on the merits, and eloquent on the defects, of reverence when taken as the single supreme motive of man. It is impossible to think of the four thousand and more years during which the Chinese have been a growing and expanding nation, always industrious, always subduing the earth to human needs, never dispirited by calamities whether inflicted by man or by nature, and not to feel that a true power lies in them, of which it will be profitable to investigate the source. But we cannot help also noticing how prone the Chinese have been to cling to ancient evils ; how strong the yoke of custom (until quite recent years) has been upon them ; and this defect came from a wrongly directed reverence. For good chiefly but not solely, the Chinese type of character has been remarkable ; and we cannot but inquire how this is reflected in their religion.

The Chinese character appears to have received its final stamp in the sixth century before Christ, through the great and famous philosopher Confucius ; but it cannot be doubted that its main characteristics had appeared long before this. If we go back to the first origin of the race, we have to look to the region south of the Caspian sea. So says Terrien de Lacouperie (as quoted in *The Story of the Nations—China*, page 2), and doubtless

he is right. Of this conclusion the character of the Chinese writing is evidence. Chinese writing is at this day in that stage which belonged to all writing before an alphabet was invented; a stage when something of the hieroglyphical character still remains; when every sign stands separate from every other sign, and each sign suggests its own meaning, not indeed at a glance, but by a nearer similarity than is possible under alphabetical systems, where the sound of each letter, and not the meaning of each sign, is the guide to the word intended. More than 30,000 signs are employed in Chinese writing; and how remote this system must be from our own western methods of writing will be seen at once. But when we find that one of the languages of the Nineveh inscriptions has no fewer than 642 characters<sup>1</sup>, we perceive that in that language also what we call an alphabet has hardly been attained; though an alphabet must have been on its way. In Chinese writing an alphabet is not even on its way; yet Terrien de Lacouperie was able to show "a marked connexion between many of the primitive written characters of the languages of Akkadia and China"—Akkadia meaning the great Mesopotamian valley. We infer, then, that in times antecedent to the earliest of the Akkadian or Sumerian languages as found in the Nineveh inscriptions, the Chinese must have been one of the races inhabiting the country between the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, including in this the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris.

Eastwards, then, from this origin, went the Chinese; but it would be vain to ask in what millennium before Christ this great migration took place. If I understand rightly what others have written on the subject, it is not merely the Chinese writing, but the Chinese spoken language, which has marks of being extremely primitive; and this would imply a very early migration from the haunts of their first habitation, where they were associated with races more given to change than they themselves were. As farther linking the Chinese with the Sumerian races, the oblique eyes of some of the latter may be mentioned<sup>2</sup>.

When the Chinese people are first mentioned in their own historical documents, we find them in the province of Shensi, along the western bank of the great river Hwang-ho, in its upper course. An ancient monarch, named Fû-hsi, is said to have governed them in those early days; but he is too shadowy a

<sup>1</sup> Sayce's *Archæology of the Cuneiform Inscriptions*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Noted by Sayce, *Archæology of the Cuneiform Inscriptions*, p. 72.



figure for serious history to dwell long upon him. The most ancient of Chinese books, the *Shû King*, begins with a brief account of a ruler of the name of Yâo, in whose time a flood took place, which may probably have resulted from an inundation of the Hwang-ho river, such as has repeatedly happened in more recent times. But the "Canon of Yâo" (by which title this part of the *Shû King* is known) contains the still more curious information that this ruler appointed astronomers by whom the four quarter-days of the year, the solstices and the equinoxes, were to be exactly determined; the days being fixed by the particular star which then culminated in the south while the sun was setting in the west. As these stars are named in the *Shû King*, modern astronomers have been able to calculate from them the date at which Yâo must have reigned, and they determine it to have been approximately in the twenty-fourth century before the Christian era. This is fairly in accordance with the traditional reckoning of Chinese philosophers and historians (as will be seen by referring to the third chapter of Dr Legge's Introduction to the *Shû King*, in the third volume of *Sacred Books of the East*); and hence we may regard Yâo as a real historical personage, living at about the date thus assigned to him.

If Yâo was a real historical personage, the inference seems to hold that the monarchs subsequent to him who are mentioned in the *Shû King* were real historical personages also; and as the art of writing is distinctly mentioned as in use at a date not far from 1700 B.C., and is probably implied in regard to a considerably earlier epoch, there is no reason for doubting that the names of the monarchs and some of the principal events of their reigns were actually recorded. In later times we have mention of court annalists or recorders<sup>1</sup>; but we have no certain knowledge when these officials began to exist; it was at any rate long before the time of Confucius (in the sixth century B.C.). But in reference to the trustworthiness of the *Shû King*, the opinion of the Chinese philosopher Mencius is important (he lived in the fourth century B.C.); here is what Dr Legge says about this<sup>2</sup>:

One passage in Mencius seems to put it beyond a doubt that the *Shû* existed as such a collection in his time. Having said that "it would be better to be without the *Shû* than to give entire credit to it," he makes immediate reference to one of the books of our classic by name, and adds, "In the Completion of the War I select two or three passages only, and believe them."

<sup>1</sup> See pages 4 and 5 of Dr Legge's Introduction to the *Shû King* just mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> In the same Introduction, page 2.

It will be seen that Mencius was a discriminating critic ; at the same time his criticism is directed towards the question of the credibility of the narrative, not to the question of the date of its composition. It is not difficult to believe that the main facts over a great part of the Shû King were noted down at the time that they happened, especially as the existence of court annalists in early times is probable ; but what is difficult to believe is that the Shû King was written down at first in the form in which we read it now. It is indeed quite surprisingly free from strange and improbable occurrences ; but that in a society emerging out of barbarism into civilisation, with so much of wildness and disorder remaining to the last, there should have been for many centuries such perfect uniformity of moral tone as that which we find in the Shû King seems impossible. The moralising is incessant ; it is never sharpened into indignation, and never remitted for the sake of picturesque narrative or any idiosyncratic tendency of the historian ; nor is it ever interrupted by lively discussion. It is an even monotonous flow ; and for a sample, take the following passage. Here is part of the speech of Thang to his nobles, when he assumed rule after defeating and destroying the dynasty of Hsiâ (about 1766 B.C. is the assigned date):

It is given to me, the One man, to secure the harmony and tranquillity of your states and clans ; and now I know not whether I may not offend against the Powers above and below. I am fearful and trembling, as if I were in danger of falling into a deep abyss. Throughout all the regions that enter on a new life under me, do not, ye princes, follow lawless ways ; make no approach to insolence and dissoluteness ; let every one be careful to keep his statutes ; that so we may receive the favour of Heaven. The good in you I will not dare to keep concealed ; and for the evil in me I will not dare to forgive myself. I will examine these things in harmony with the mind of God. When guilt is found anywhere in you who occupy the myriad regions, let it rest on me, the One man. When guilt is found in me, the One man, it shall not attach to you who occupy the myriad regions. Oh ! let us attain to be sincere in these things, and so we shall likewise have a happy consummation. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. III. pp. 90-1.

We run little risk in saying that the victorious soldier Thang was not himself the author of that edifying harangue. But when we find the same sort of moral reflectiveness overspreading the whole of the Shû King, it is plain that the speeches in it can lay claim to no sort of genuineness ; though they may give us an idea of what Confucius and his disciples thought. The speeches



in the Shû King are hardly likely to be older than the era of Confucius ; but the kind of religion which the above passage implies is likely to be older than Confucius, and it will be well to say something about it.

“Heaven” and “God” ; or to use the Chinese words, “Tien” and “Shang Tî” ; these are the two words in which the Chinese express the ultimate ruling divinity of the universe. In “Tien” the personal element is sunk ; in “Shang Tî” it is prominent ; Shang Tî is the Creator, the Sovereign of all. But Shang Tî is not thought of as ruling singly or without ministers of the divine purposes ; these ministers exist all around us ; among them are reckoned the spirits of sun, moon, and stars, the spirits of mountains and hills, the spirits of seas and rivers ; and nearer still to human affections, the spirits of departed ancestors. A belief of this kind, though it may be called polytheistic, still assigns a unity to the Supreme Being ; it has a certain dignity, and even a certain imaginative truth, although truth hard for us to define and realise. But the weakness of the belief, as the Chinese held it, was that they introduced into it the principle of gradation of ranks, making the heavenly order of things appear to be fashioned on the model of a highly artificial human society. It was thought a lack of decent humility if an ordinary human being approached the Most High in sacrifice or prayer. The monarch might do so ; and in doing so, the monarch would sacrifice and pray not only on his own behalf but on behalf of his people, on solemn stated occasions ; but an ordinary man would pray to his departed ancestors. There is a certain connexion between the want, in the Chinese, of that supreme daring which alone can break through ingrained errors of the past, and this formalism brought into the midst of their highest spiritual theories. The message of the Hebrew prophet, into whose ears the Almighty has spoken “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones,” was debarred to the Chinese ; and how much exaltation and comfort of heart did they not lose in this way !

But to return to the Shû King. Stripping off its moralising mantle, what do we find beneath ? We find in it the history of a race more than commonly intelligent, more than commonly persevering ; not one of the most warlike races, though not incapable of fighting ; not free from cruelty, especially in the

way of legal punishments, but desirous that that cruelty should not be made worse by injustice ; a race that continually pushed back, in cases where it could not civilise, the barbarous races which surrounded it. Beginning as an inland race, it reached the seacoast at last. In three ways did the Chinese race employ its strength ; first, in observation and material construction ; secondly, in the determination of ethics and religion ; thirdly, not in so laudable a manner, in the arts of divination. Superstitious we must account these ; and yet these superstitious practices did not in the early times greatly corrupt the Chinese religion ; they stood separate from it. And so it is, I believe, even at the present day, in China, in so far as Confucianism has sway ; the other two recognised religions of the country, Tâoism and Buddhism, have adhered less to their primary motive, and have been more seriously corrupted.

What are we to think about the details of the history in the Shû King ? It is a fragmentary history ; considerable portions have been lost. Even in what has reached us there is often a certain meagreness. But there are interesting passages. Take, for instance, what we are told about that very early hero, Yü, whose date is placed at 2205 B.C. His first service was to repair the damages of a great flood, afterwards he became a monarch ; and the first of the Hsiâ line of kings. (I regard the rise and fall of the several dynasties of Hsiâ, Shang, and Châu as historical, but their details are hardly pertinent to my present purpose.) What I am here concerned to recount is the gradual formation of the Chinese civilising energy in all its parts ; and the amount and character of the tribute paid to Yü, the monarch whom I have already named, will give us some idea of the progress of the Chinese in very early times. Here is the list of what was sent him from the province of Ching Châu.

Feathers, hair, elephants' teeth, and hides ; gold, silver, and copper ; Khun trees, wood for bows, cedars, and cypresses ; grindstones, whetstones, flint stones to make arrowheads, and cinnabar ; and the Khun and lû bamboos, with the lû tree (all good for making arrows). . . . The three-ribbed rush was sent in bundles, put into cases. The baskets were filled with silken fabrics, azure and deep purple, and with strings of pearls that were not quite round. From the country of the nine Kiang the great tortoise was presented when specially required. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. III. p. 69.

The use of flintstones for arrowheads is an evidence of real antiquity ; it would seem that iron was rare, though the wild province of Liang Châu did supply it, as we learn in another part



of this document. Agriculture was not neglected, and the different kinds of soils were known and classified; "woven ornamental fabrics" and "fine cloth" were part of the tribute from some of the other provinces, and the art of producing silk was already known. The following sentence, from the account of the tribute paid to Yü, is interesting for several reasons:

The wild people of Lâi were taught tillage and pasturage, and brought in their baskets the silk from the mountain mulberry tree. *Ibid.* vol. III. p. 66.

We see from this that the primitive Chinese instructed their less civilised neighbours in peaceful arts; a more excellent plan than making war upon them and rooting them out. Also the expression "they brought in their baskets the silk from the mountain mulberry tree" appears to show that the wild silkworms (as I believe is known or conjectured from other sources) left their cocoons, and probably long trails of the silken thread, on the mulberry trees whose leaves had served them for food; so that Virgil's expression,

Velleraque ut foliis depectant tenuia Seres,

is not so incorrect as it has sometimes been thought to be. It does not appear from the document here quoted whether the Chinese at the date of king Yü *cultivated* the silkworm or not, but from the amount of silk evidently used it is probable that they had begun to do so, and were not entirely dependent on what could be procured by more natural and inartificial means. This same chapter on the tribute paid to Yü also gives evidence of the care taken in keeping rivers within their proper channels, and in draining marshes; also in obtaining the produce of the sea, and in other details which it is not necessary to enumerate fully.

We see then that the Chinese, in the most primitive times known to us, were in the right way towards civilisation; in the right way as regards enterprise, in the right way also as regards an orderly and friendly disposition. Doubts which may be felt as to the date of Yü, or even as to his real existence, cannot greatly alter the evidence on these points; and the care bestowed on geography, the care also to hand down these facts to posterity, show that the nation at large had a right-minded and progressive temperament. A perusal of the collection of lyrics called the *Shih King* will strengthen this impression. The oldest of these lyrics would appear to have been written some time before 1721 B.C., in honour of some of the ancestors of the dynasty of Shang. But very few of the other poems in the collection at

all approximate to this date ; most were evidently written under the Châu dynasty, which reigned from 1122 B.C. to 256 B.C. All of these pieces are pure and right-minded ; many are poetical and pleasing. Let me quote a few brief extracts. Here is an ode written in time of prosperity :

There is peace throughout our myriad regions. There has been a succession of plentiful years ; Heaven does not weary in its favour. The martial king Wû maintained the confidence of his officers, and employed them all over the kingdom, so securing the establishment of his family. Oh ! glorious was he in the sight of Heaven, which kinged him in the room of Shang. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. III. p. 335.

Here again is a brief festal ode ; and the picturesque element in it enhances the feeling :

On the trees go the blows kang-kang ; and the birds cry out ying-ying. One issues from the dark valley, and removes to the lofty tree. Ying goes its cry, seeking with its voice its companion. Look at the bird, bird as it is, seeking with its voice its companion ; and shall a man not seek to have his friends ? Spiritual beings will then hearken to him ; he shall have harmony and peace. *Ibid.* vol. III. p. 347.

Here is an ode written in a time of disorder and general affliction ; the poet thinks of the times that are past :

Small is the cooing dove, but it flies aloft to heaven. My heart is wounded with sorrow, and I think of our forefathers. When the dawn is breaking, and I cannot sleep, the thoughts in my breast are of our parents.

Men who are grave and wise, though they drink, are mild and masters of themselves ; but those who are benighted and ignorant become devoted to drink, and more so daily. Be careful, each of you, of your deportment ; what Heaven confers, when once lost, is not regained.

The greenbeaks come and go, picking up grain about the stackyard. Alas for the distressed and solitary, deemed fit inmates for the prisons ! With a handful of grain I go out and divine, how I may be able to become good. *Ibid.* vol. III. p. 359.

Proverbs may amuse, without being convincing. Here are two :

A flaw in a mace of white jade may be ground away ; but for a flaw in speech nothing can be done.

To look for horns on a young ram will only weary you, my son. *Ibid.* vol. III. pp. 415, 416.

Here is another lament on the sorrowful state of the people :

Luxuriant is that young mulberry tree, and beneath it wide is the shade ; but they will pluck its leaves till it is quite destroyed. The distress inflicted on these multitudes of the people is an unceasing sorrow to my heart ; my commiseration fills my breast. O thou bright and great Heaven, shouldest thou not have compassion on us ? *Ibid.* vol. III. p. 417.



Here, finally, is a part of a love-story ; the maiden is the narrator :

A simple-looking lad you were, carrying cloth to exchange it for silk. But you came not so to purchase silk ; you came to make proposals to me. I convoyed you through the river Khi, as far as the height of Tun. "It is not I," I said, "who would protract the time ; but you have had no good go-between. I pray you be not angry, and let autumn be the time."

I ascended that ruinous wall, to look towards Fû-kwan ; and when I saw you not coming from it, my tears flowed in streams. When I did see you coming from Fû-kwan, I laughed and I spoke. You had consulted (you said) the tortoise-shell and the divining stalks, and there was nothing unfavourable in their response. "Then come," I said, "with your carriage and I will remove with my goods !" *Ibid.* vol. III. p. 437-8.

The maiden, we must regret to learn, was cast off in the end. But the reader will observe mention in this passage of two of the main processes of divination, used for both public and private purposes ; the marks on the shell of the tortoise, and the arrangement of the stalks of the Khi plant ("probably the *Achillea millefolium*," says Dr Legge). Superstition there certainly is in such practices, but not a dark or very blamable superstition.

The reader will, I think, allow that there was a tender and natural flow of feeling in the people who could do and write the things which I have transcribed from the ancient books of China ; that there was energy in them moreover, and a feeling of duty ; and if he thinks that their imagination went beyond the mark in assigning to every mountain and river its individual spirit, and also in the worship of their departed ancestors, we cannot afford wholly to despise such imaginations ; where they felt sacredness, there was some sacredness, though not the precise foundation of worship which they imagined to be there. Who can but be moved, even if he must a little smile, when the duke of Châu prays for the life of his sick brother the king, asking his ancestors to take himself away from this world in place of his brother, on the ground that he had spiritual abilities which his brother lacked, and was better fitted to serve his ancestors in the world of spirits ? Nor must we forget that over the world of unseen spirits these ancient Chinese held that a Supreme Spirit rules ; there was a largeness in their conceptions, even when their actual practice went wrong.

Other points in these primitive ages (and I speak of times earlier than the sixth century before Christ) are worthy of notice, though I must mention them but briefly. We read of standard

measures of length, capacity, and (probably) of weight; of astronomical observations, which had no doubt some relation to astrology, though not without other applications, as for instance indicating the seasons of the year; of musical instruments, especially the "sounding-stone"; of the building of temples and altars, and of sacrifices, including sacrifices of animals. We read prohibitions of drunkenness; and we read, finally, of a third system of divination (besides the divination from the tortoise shell and that from the Khi plant) which has curious mathematical affinities; a system expounded in a treatise, highly esteemed by Confucius, called the *Yî King*. We ourselves may glance at its pages with amusement, and from its Appendices we may even draw instruction; moreover the way in which the *Yî King* makes linear measurements emblematic of morality and prudence will remind us of the way in which the Greek philosopher Pythagoras regarded number as the primary essence of all things, moral as well as material. The hexagrams of the *Yî King* were, it is said, elaborated by one of the heroes of old time (who afterwards, under the name and title of king Wan became the founder of a dynasty), when imprisoned by the tyrannical monarch whom he afterwards dethroned; but the first suggestion of the hexagrams appears to have been still more ancient.

And now I come to the era of the great philosophers; of Lâu-tsze, born 604 B.C.; and of Confucius, born 551 B.C. The third greatest name in Chinese literature is that of Mencius, who lived in the fourth century before Christ, and was a follower of Confucius. It will of course be understood that Confucius and Mencius are Latinised names, of which the Chinese equivalents are Kung-foo-tsze and Mang respectively.

The name of Lâu-tsze was never Latinised; from which it is clear that Lâu-tsze was a philosopher of less wide fame than the other two. Yet as a philosopher, Lâu-tsze is certainly the greatest whom China has produced. Had he possessed missionary energy equal to his intellectual perspicacity, his would have been far the greatest of Chinese names; but from his writings we should gather that he disapproved of missionary energy; he thought it too turbulent. Such entire disapproval was a mistake, and this really was his own mistake; but for the superstitions which became attached afterwards to the name of Tâoism he is no more responsible than he is for the invention of Grimm's Fairy Tales. Often as the thoughts of great souls have been



distorted by unworthy followers, it is seldom that the depravation has been carried so far as in this case. It is of the system of the Tão, as taught genuinely by himself, that I must now speak ; or in other words I must give some account of Lâu-tsze's sole surviving work, the *Tão Teh King*, as that is exhibited in the lucid translation of Dr Legge, in the 39th volume of the *Sacred Books of the East*.

That Lâu-tsze was not a faultless philosopher, it is perhaps hardly necessary to say ; but his strength is that which we have to understand first.

The greatest theme which he propounds is the value of spontaneity, of that origination which flows silently from the heart of a man. Heaven and earth, he says, came into existence by a method which was impalpable, indiscernible. You would say, "There is nothing at work" ; yet out of this non-working, everything that we see is produced. This secret, silent method he calls the Tão. "The Tão does nothing, and therefore there is nothing which it does not do" ; such is the brief paradox in which he sums up the whole of his system. Or, to quote a verse in which this idea is rather expanded, he says :

The movement of the Tão  
By contraries proceeds ;  
And weakness marks the course  
Of Tão's mighty deeds.

*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxxix. p. 83.

It will be seen that, according to this verse, although the working of the Tão is in a true sense weak, yet strength is brought out of it ; and it may be asked whether Lâu-tsze assigns any function to strength, as well as to weakness, in the work of creation. Yes, he does ; it is not weakness alone, but weakness inseparably combined with strength, to which he attributes practical efficiency ; and the whole, strength and weakness, must be hidden from the eyes of men, to accomplish the greatest works. In the physical universe, water, with its readiness to yield at a touch, and yet its intense penetrative power, is his type of the Tão, of the creative method ; of the divine method, we may truly say ; but Lâu-tsze says, "It might appear to have been before God." That is a sentiment with which we shall not agree, though we must not call it atheistic. We should rather say, "It is eternally inherent in God."

It is not, however, the physical universe which has the primary attraction for Lâu-tsze, though he assumes indeed that the

physical universe has the Tào for its root ; but it is in our own selves that he first marks the Tào's existence. Take for instance the following lines :

Who knows his manhood's strength,  
Yet still his female feebleness maintains ;  
As to one channel flow the many drains,  
All come to him, yea, all beneath the sky.  
Thus he the constant excellence retains ;—  
The simple child again, free from all stains.

Who knows how white attracts,  
Yet always keeps himself within black's shade,  
The pattern of humility displayed,  
Displayed in view of all beneath the sky ;  
He in the unchanging excellence arrayed,  
Endless return to man's first state has made.

Who knows how glory shines,  
Yet loves disgrace, nor e'er for it grows pale ;  
Behold his presence in a spacious vale,  
To which men come from all beneath the sky.  
The unchanging excellence completes its tale ;  
The simple infant man in him we hail.

*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxxix. p. 71.

Lão-tsze lays great stress on the virtue of timeliness, as being that which renders the employment of violence unnecessary. "Action," he writes, "should be taken before a thing has made its appearance ; order should be secured before disorder has begun." *Ibid.* vol. xxxix. p. 107.

He deprecates violent warlike action without saying that it is always avoidable ; "He who has killed multitudes of men," he writes, "should weep for them with the bitterest grief." *Ibid.* vol. xxxix, p. 74.

Here are passages in which the ultimate divine agency is referred to :

It is the way of Heaven not to strive, and yet it skilfully overcomes ; not to speak, and yet it is skilful in (obtaining) a reply ; does not call, and yet men come to it of themselves. Its demonstrations are quiet, and yet its plans are skilful and effective. The meshes of the net of Heaven are large ; far apart, but letting nothing escape. *Ibid.* vol. xxxix. p. 116.

There is always One who presides over the infliction of death. He who would inflict death in the room of him who so presides over it may be described as hewing wood instead of a great carpenter. Seldom is it that he who undertakes the hewing, instead of the great carpenter, does not cut his own hands ! *Ibid.* vol. xxxix. p. 117.

Here is a passage in which he describes, more clearly perhaps



than in any other, the type of moral excellence which he is inculcating :

I have three precious things which I prize and hold fast. The first is gentleness ; the second is economy ; and the third is shrinking from taking precedence of others. With that gentleness I can be bold ; with that economy I can be liberal ; shrinking from taking precedence of others I can become a vessel of the highest honour. Nowadays they give up gentleness and are for being bold ; economy, and are all for being liberal ; the hindmost place, and seek only to be foremost ; of all which the end is death. *Ibid.* vol. xxxix. p. 110.

Lastly, let me quote the following passage, which in the light of Christian history we may call truly prophetic :

Every one in the world knows that the soft overcomes the hard, and the weak the strong, but no one is able to carry it out in practice. Therefore a sage has said,

He who accepts his state's reproach,  
Is hailed therefore its altars' lord ;  
To him who bears men's direful woes  
They all the name of king accord.

Words that are strictly true seem to be paradoxical. *Ibid.* vol. xxxix. p. 120.

Is not this on the very highest pinnacle of morality ? I cannot but think that my reader will be surprised to see such direct inculcation of the doctrines of humility and self-denying acceptance of pain, with the full knowledge that this is the true creative principle, put forward in China in the sixth century before Christ. "To recompense injury with kindness" is also a maxim which we find in the Tâo Teh King (in the 39th volume of *Sacred Books of the East*, p. 106) ; and this was a maxim to which Confucius himself was unable to attain ; he somewhat demurred to it, though by no means as encouraging vindictiveness.

It will be right to counterbalance the sayings which I have quoted above by one that will show the weaker side of Lâo-tsze. In the following passage, the second sentence is not wrong ; but the first and third sentences cannot be defended. It is, as will be seen, a passage in praise of a simple life :

I would make the people (in a little state) return to the use of knotted cords (instead of the written characters). They should think their (coarse) food sweet, their (plain) clothes beautiful ; their (poor) dwellings places of rest ; and their common (simple) ways sources of enjoyment. There should be a neighbouring state within sight, and the voices of the fowls and dogs should be heard all the way from it to us ; but I would make the people to old age, even to death, not have any intercourse with it. *Ibid.* vol. xxxix. p. 122.

This is making of no account the natural human feeling of

curiosity, the joy in the acquisition of something new; it is making simplicity a bar to progress, which certainly it ought not to be. But we must not be surprised that Lâu-tsze in a few passages drew incorrect inferences from a correct principle. His primary conception has been thought obscure; but when once it is understood that by the Tâu a Method is intended, a Method penetrative, universal, reaching into every avenue of reality and influencing all things, I do not think that any great difficulty lies in his expressions.

The treatise from which I have been quoting is the only one of his which has survived; and the narrative which tells us in what manner the Tâu Teh King was produced is curious and interesting. Here it is, as related by the Chinese historian, Sze-mâ Khien (who lived in the first century before the Christian era), and translated by Dr Legge (*The Religions of China*, p. 206):

Lâu-tsze cultivated the tâu and virtue, the chief aim of his studies being how to keep himself concealed and remain unknown. He continued to reside at (the capital of) Cháu, but, after a long time, seeing the decay of the dynasty, he left it, and went away to the gate leading out of the state to the northwest. Yin Hsi, keeper of the gate, said to him, "You are about to withdraw yourself out of sight; I pray you to compose for me first a book." On this Lâu-tsze wrote a book in two parts, setting forth his views on Tâu and virtue, in more than five thousand characters. He then went away, and it is not known where he died. He was a superior man who liked to keep himself unknown.

Though Sze-mâ Khien in the above passage says that it was not known where Lâu-tsze died, Kwang-Tze, the most famous follower of Lâu-tsze, but living two hundred years after him, gives us this interesting particular about his death, that his loss was deeply lamented by old and young. We at the present day should certainly consider this as evidence of the attractiveness of his personality; but in his own day another inference was sometimes drawn. His friend Khin Shih, offended by the sight of what he regarded as unmanly grief, "the old men wailing as if they had lost a son, the young men wailing as if they had lost their mother," declared that Lâu-tsze himself must have failed in the training of his disciples, for it to have been possible that they should so abandon the serenity which philosophy prescribes. Yet Buddha and Socrates were bewailed by their followers in a similar manner; and of Confucius too we read that his disciples mourned at his grave for three years<sup>1</sup>.

If we are to find fault with Lâu-tsze, it must be on far other

<sup>1</sup> See *Confucianism*, &c., by Professor Douglas, p. 63.



ground than this. We shall have to admit that the reproach which is sometimes cast on Christianity, but which is not I think true of genuine Christianity, is true of him; he assigned less than their proper value to those positive and arduous efforts, and to those passionate hopes, out of which the world's progress comes. Passivity is too much honoured by him. Yet I do not like to call him a dreamer, as Dr Legge does; there is too much truth in his views for this to be permissible. Only his disregard of the enforcement of practical energy had an unfavourable effect on the development of his disciples after him; and, though far from being an atheist, he resembled Buddha and the great Brahmin philosophers in not having an adequate feeling of the manner in which the Divine power strengthens men from within.

In one anecdote related of him, Lâu-tsze is made to appear rude. It is possible that he was so, though his tone and manner, if these had been fully conveyed to us, might modify the impression of his reported words; but in any case it will be proper to quote the anecdote as it has come down to us. It relates to the single occasion on which Lâu-tsze and Confucius are recorded to have met. Confucius must be supposed to have been expounding his own views with some animation; the reply of the elder philosopher is caustic, though not malevolent:

"I have heard," Lâu-tsze is represented as saying, "that a good merchant, though he have rich treasures safely stored, appears as if he were poor; and that the superior man, though his virtue be complete, is yet to outward seeming stupid. Put away your proud air and many desires, your insinuating habit and wild will. They are of no advantage to you;—this is all I have to tell you." *Religions of China*, p. 205.

It must be remembered that Lâu-tsze was eighty-seven years old when he is reported as speaking thus, and Confucius thirty-four. It does not appear that Confucius took offence; but his comment afterwards was rather humorous:

I know that birds can fly, fishes swim, and animals run. But the runner may be snared, the swimmer hooked, and the flyer shot by the arrow. But there is the dragon; I cannot tell how he mounts on the wind through the clouds, and rises to heaven. Today I have seen Lâu-tsze, and can only compare him to the dragon.

That is to say, Lâu-tsze's philosophy was in the eyes of Confucius lofty, but unrealisable. It is not exactly the comment which I have made myself, but it is a not unnatural comment, nor quite without reason.

A more celebrated name is Confucius than Lâu-tsze; yet as far as originality is concerned, and native apprehension of the

profoundest principles of morality, Lâu-tsze is unquestionably the superior. When, however, we compare the two men, not as thinkers, but as actors, the superiority is on the other side. It is in no wise necessary to set in opposition to each other two men whose qualifications were so wholly different. Confucius was essentially, as Professor Douglas calls him, a statesman; for though he had no immediate direction of state affairs, his effort was always directed towards practical good, not theoretical insight. As he said of himself, he was a lover of the ancients, a transmitter of the wisdom of elder generations; he took the moral principles that were traditional in his country, principles by no means wanting in enlightenment, and devoted all his labour to enforcing them both on the young who were starting in life, and on rulers who needed guidance in governing. It must be admitted that he attributed too much value to the outward form of ceremonies, as compared with their inner meaning; yet the outward form is not valueless; there is a function performed by it, in bringing before the minds of men thoughts which in the hurry of life they might otherwise forget.

Both Lâu-tsze and Confucius lived in disturbed times, and the remedy which they respectively sought was different; Lâu-tsze endeavoured to penetrate into the roots of the moral temperament, Confucius endeavoured to set men actually to work with those moral qualities which they possessed. All the precepts of Confucius that have come down to us have a direct practical bearing. Thus at the beginning of the *Hsiáo King* he writes :

Filial piety is the root of all virtue, and the stem out of which grows all moral teaching... When we have established our characters by the practice of the filial course, so as to make our name famous in future ages, and thereby glorify our parents—this is the end of filial piety. It commences with the service of parents; it proceeds to the service of the ruler; it is completed by the establishment of the character. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. III. p. 466.

In the above words we have an expansion of the sentence with which *Lî Kî* begins: "Always and in everything let there be reverence"; an admonition older no doubt than the era of Confucius, but which certainly was very dear to his heart. Yet Confucius knew that filial piety must not be slavish. When one of his followers asked him whether filial piety was to be interpreted as meaning simple obedience, he answered :

What words are these !... When a case of unrighteous conduct is concerned, a son must by no means keep from remonstrating with his father, nor a minister from remonstrating with his ruler. *Ibid.* vol. III. pp. 483-4.



For a minister to remonstrate with his ruler was in those times not free from danger ; as was proved by the followers of Confucius on a critical occasion some three centuries after his time. Here again is a maxim of somewhat similar effect from the Appendices to the Yî King :

The superior man, in his intercourse with the high, uses no flattery, and in his intercourse with the low, no coarse freedom : does not this show that he knows the springs of things ? Those springs are the slight beginnings of movement. *Ibid.* vol. xvi. p. 392.

The Appendices to the Yî King are not in their entirety the work of Confucius, though doubtless the work of his followers ; but when the " Master " is expressly quoted, as we find to be the case in regard to the above passage, we may then conclude that we have the words of Confucius himself. So it is in the following instructive passages :

He who keeps danger in mind is he who will rest safe in his seat ; he who keeps ruin in mind is he who will preserve his interests secure ; he who sets the danger of disorder before him is he who will maintain the state of order. Therefore, the superior man, when resting in safety, does not forget that danger may come ; when in a state of security, he does not forget the possibility of ruin ; and when all is in a state of order, he does not forget that disorder may come. Thus his person is kept safe, and his states and all their clans can be preserved. *Ibid.* vol. xvi. pp. 391-2.

The following, in verse, is in a tenderer strain :

One man his lips with silence seals ;  
Another all his mind reveals.  
But when two men are one in heart,  
Not iron bolts keep them apart ;  
The words they in their union use,  
Fragrance like orchid plants diffuse.

*Ibid.* vol. xvi. p. 362.

Again :

He toils with success, but does not boast of it ; he achieves merit, but takes no virtue to himself from it :—this is the height of generous goodness, and speaks of the man who with great merit yet places himself below others. *Ibid.* vol. xvi. p. 362.

Again, on the necessity of reticence :

If important matters in the germ be not kept secret, that will be injurious to their accomplishment. *Ibid.* vol. xvi. p. 363.

Again, on the quietude of natural processes :

In all the processes taking place under heaven, what is there of thinking ? what is there of anxious scheming ? They all come to the same successful issue, though by different paths ; there is one result, though there might be a hundred anxious schemes. What is there of thinking ? what is there of anxious scheming ? *Ibid.* vol. xvi. p. 389.

Interesting, again, is the following testimony to his favourite disciple Yen Hui :

I may venture to say that the son of the Yen family had nearly attained the standard of perfection. If anything he did was not good, he was sure to become conscious of that ; and when he knew it, he did not do the thing again. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xvi. p. 392.

I quote the following from Dr Legge's work, *The Religions of China*, p. 137 :

Tsze-kung once asked him [Confucius] if there were one word which would serve as a rule of conduct for all the life ; and he replied, "Is not reciprocity such a word ? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." Subsequently, when the disciple told him that he was carrying this rule into practice, he replied, "Tsze, you have not attained to that." He was thus aware of the difficulty of obeying the precept, and he confessed on one occasion that he himself failed to do so. His words then also showed that the rule had for him not only a negative form, but also a positive form. He was unable, he said, to take the initiative in serving his father as he would require his son to serve him.

I must not forget to quote from the same work (p. 140) yet another utterance :

He who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray ; from which it will be seen that Confucius was truly religious ; as certainly he was, though he was well aware that the religious instincts take us into a sphere that lies beyond our absolute knowledge.

It is impossible not to feel admiration for a man who laboured so persistently as Confucius did through a long life to introduce order, reverence, and kindness into the actions of his fellow-countrymen, at a time of no common disorder, and amid many rebuffs. Whether as an official or in private life, he appears to have been singularly faithful ; it would be too much to say that he was wholly without fault, but few men have been less chargeable with distinct acts of wrong-doing. As regards his family relations, he wept bitterly over the death of his mother ; but it is possible, though the evidence is very slight, that he was wanting in affection for his wife.

His own death was not wanting in pathos. He had lost his two best-loved disciples ; and in the spring of 478 B.C. he felt his end was near. Let me quote Dr Legge (*Religions of China*, p. 133) :

Early one morning, we are told, he got up ; and, with his hands behind his back, dragging his staff, he moved about by the door, crooning over,



The great mountain must crumble ;  
The strong beam must break ;  
And the wise man wither away like a plant.

After a little he entered the house, and sat down opposite the door. Tsze-kung had heard his words, and said to himself, "If the great mountain crumble, to what shall I look up ? If the strong beam break, and the wise man wither away, on whom shall I lean ? I fear the master is going to be ill." With this he hastened into the house, when Confucius told him a dream which he had had in the night, and which he thought presaged his death, adding, "No intelligent monarch arises ; there is no prince in the kingdom who will make me his master My time has come to die." So it was. He took to his couch, and after seven days expired.

He was mourned with great sincerity of grief by his disciples ; but the period of his extraordinary influence did not come at once. China was distracted with internal commotions, and if the cultured and learned were more and more disposed to regard Confucius as the model of excellence (for his influence even then was beginning to transcend that of Lâu-tsze), this was not equally the case with kings and princes. At last, in the latter part of the third century B.C., the dynasty of Cháu having wholly disappeared, the great, powerful, terrible emperor Shih Hwang Tî came to the throne. He by his warlike abilities overcame all his rivals, and for the first time reduced the empire to an absolute unity of rule ; he built the famous Great Wall to be a protection against the outer barbarians ; he made roads through the whole country (it is said) ; he centralised the military administration, and disarmed the provincial centres which had been for centuries the origin of civil wars ; and under his strong hand China was at peace. But in the course of his unification of China he came into collision with many points of ancient ceremonial, valued in themselves, and ratified by the great authority of Confucius. With the directness of a practical man, impatient of the past when it would interfere with the present, he desired to abrogate or curtail much that had been customary in religious usage. It is not easy for us to say how far such a design was in itself a good one ; for ceremonial ministers sometimes to genuine feeling and sometimes to the decayed semblance of genuine feeling, and in the one case it is good, in the other case bad. But the separation of vital feeling from its dead imitation is always a difficult task ; and Shih Hwang Tî, who was wont to sit on his throne with a naked sword in his hand, was not prone to delicacy of procedure. The literary classes were, above all men in China, conservators of ceremonial, and a deep animosity soon arose between them

and Shih Hwang Tî. Probably there would have been a way to reconciliation, if the reverence paid to Lâu-tsze had been as great among the people generally as the reverence paid to Confucius, for in that case the literary classes would have been divided, and would not in their entirety have faced the monarchy as a hostile power. But Confucius had become then, as he is now, the recognised Master of thought in China. Accordingly, in a great meeting held at the imperial capital, Hienyang, in the year 213 B.C., the smouldering fire broke out. The emperor was presiding ; his prime minister, Lisseh, was by his side ; governors of provinces, officials, and the representatives of literature and of ceremonial were gathered for consultation. (I take the main points of the scene from D. C. Boulger's *History of China*, vol. i. pp. 72 *sqq.*) The emperor (sword in hand, we must suppose) called upon those present to give their candid opinion of his government and his legislation. Candour has not always been manifested by an audience under such circumstances ; but the followers of Confucius had been trained on principles that implanted courage in their hearts, and Shih Hwang Tî was destined to hear words of candour on this occasion. At first, indeed, a courtier arose, and delivered a panegyric wholly agreeable to his exalted hearer, whom he described as having surpassed the very greatest of his imperial predecessors. But the learned part of the assembly were stung by words which seemed a dishonour to the ancient monarchs ; one of them rose, and stigmatising the speech which he had just heard as "vile flattery," advocated the restoration of those separate principalities throughout China which it had been the great work of Shih Hwang Tî to abolish. This was certainly an extreme proposition, and when the emperor refused to listen to it, and called upon his prime minister, Lisseh, to justify that remodelling of the empire which had been carried out, he was well within his rights. But Lisseh was not content with vindicating what had been done ; he perceived that the occasion was a critical one, and he determined within himself that now was the time for delivering his imperial master from his last and most irreconcilable enemy, the formidable literary classes. He demanded that all books throughout the empire should be burnt, except such as treated of medicine, agriculture, and divination. These three subjects appeared to him to be of practical utility ; but history, in his opinion, only fed men's minds with phantom-like memories, and rendered them incapable of appreciating the true needs of mankind. The emperor accepted the suggestion of his



minister, and directed him to lose no time in carrying out the burning of the books.

Thus the forces of authority, all over China, were set to work to destroy every scrap of history and of literature (in the proper sense of that word) which could be found. The literary men had been foolishly conservative; but they had not deserved such a sentence as this, and the emperor's decree meant the bringing back of China to barbarism. When, then, we read that four hundred and sixty literary men were buried alive on the charge of impeding the execution of the decree, we can only esteem them as martyrs in a just cause; and despite the real services which Shih Hwang Tî had rendered in other ways to the well-being of China, we can only regard his death, which took place three years after the promulgation of the decree, as a happy event and a deliverance for the best interests of China. He died, and the Ch'in dynasty (of which he was the most remarkable member) survived him only some four years; and the Han dynasty, which next came into power, was anxious in every way to repair the destruction which had been committed. Every corner of the empire was ransacked for manuscripts which had been hidden away from the fury of the destroyer; what could not be recovered from actual written documents was often supplied by the incomparable memory of Chinese students; and in the end, though some things had been irrecoverably lost, quite enough remained to enable the Confucian teaching again to take its place, which it retains to the present hour, as the most cherished possession of the whole Chinese people.

The reader will not think me unregardful of the great merit of Confucius; but no doubt his fame is partly due to the fact that he fell in with the general current of feeling and thought in his own people. Lâo-tsze, who discerned the power which lies in the quiet unforced motions of the spirit, deserves at least as much attention from us now; and the similarity between his ethics and Christian ethics will strike every one, though there are also obvious differences.

An anecdote in Book xxxi. of the writings of Kwang-tsze is interesting as showing the difference between Lâo-tsze and Confucius in a manner to bring out the strength of Lâo-tsze and the weak side of Confucius; and though Kwang-tsze (the most distinguished of the school of Lâo-tsze) would naturally lay stress on the points in which his own master had the superiority, there is no dishonour to Confucius implied in it. The narrative tells

how Confucius, wandering in a forest with his disciples, at last left them and met an old fisherman, with whom he conversed. The old fisherman was a follower of the doctrine of the Tâu ; and after pointing out to Confucius the troubles and frequent faults of personal conduct which are unavoidable in an active career of political or philosophical teaching (such a career as that to which Confucius had devoted himself) at last plainly tells the great philosopher that he had not "guarded his proper Truth."

Confucius with an air of sadness said, "Allow me to ask what it is that you call my proper Truth." The stranger replied, "A man's proper Truth is pure sincerity in its highest degree—without this pure sincerity one cannot move others. Hence if one only forces himself to wail, however sadly he may do so, it is not real sorrow ; if he forces himself to be angry, however he may seem to be severe, he excites no awe ; if he forces himself to show affection, however he may smile, he awakens no harmonious reciprocation. True grief, without a sound, is yet sorrowful ; true anger, without any demonstration, yet awakens awe ; true affection, without a smile, yet produces a harmonious reciprocation. Given this truth within, it exercises a spiritual efficacy without, and this is why we count it so valuable. . . . Rites are prescribed for the practice of the common people ; man's proper Truth is what he has received from Heaven, operating spontaneously, and unchangeable." *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XL. pp. 198-9.

. An admirable passage ; and we are not surprised to learn that Confucius, with that humility which was his most charming characteristic, bowed twice to the fisherman, and begged, with extraordinary thanks, to have the honour of coming to hear him again. But this the fisherman declined, and no doubt rightly ; he had said his say, more words would but have spoiled it. Now the followers of Confucius had witnessed this scene from a distance, and felt unbounded amazement when they saw their master, whom they had been accustomed to see standing erect and proud before princes and rulers, bowing low before an old fisherman ; and one of them remonstrated with him for so doing. But Confucius replied, "If you see a man of superior wisdom and goodness, and do not honour him, you want the great characteristic of humanity." These are words to be remembered ; and yet perhaps Confucius did not mean to give up his own case so entirely as would at first sight appear from this narrative. The old fisherman, and Lâu-tsze himself, hardly sufficiently felt the danger which lies in a man becoming a hermit, and this danger at any rate Confucius escaped entirely.

It has been the object of this chapter, in the main, to describe the seminal elements of Chinese belief and practice ; but it is



impossible altogether to abstain from noticing the historical results of that belief and practice in subsequent ages. For China has never fallen into the confusion into which India has fallen. China, like Japan, stands independent before the world, anxious to learn, and capable of learning ; but not weakened by indolence or by deep-seated internal conflicts.

The two most distinguished followers of Lâo-tsze and Confucius respectively, Kwang-tsze and Mang (or Mencius) both lived in the fourth century before Christ ; and they are interesting persons, but I must not say more about them here.

The cataclysm which had threatened to overwhelm Chinese literature and thought when the powerful emperor Shih Hwang Tî endeavoured to destroy nearly all the existent literature of the country, was not only stayed by the accession of Kaoti, the founder of the Han dynasty, to the throne in 206 B.C. ; a great outburst of literary activity took place in China immediately after that date. Moreover, from the first century of the Christian era onwards, Buddhism gained a footing in China, and grew with no slight success. Incorrect as it is to think of Buddhism as the religion of China (an error not infrequently committed by writers of the western world), it is yet one of the religions there recognised, and has no small number of adherents ; and it has produced a considerable (and I believe beneficial) effect on the whole tone of Chinese feeling. Only one effect which we must regard as unfortunate has been produced by it. The weakness of Buddhism lies in its want of a rational theology, and its followers have too often supplied this want by superstitious imaginations. This has happened in the case of Chinese Buddhism, and Tâoism has caught the infection, and is immersed in superstitions. Though indeed Tâoism had been by no means free from superstitious beliefs and practices before the advent of Buddhism into China, yet the advent of Buddhism greatly increased the evil. Those who desire to know more on this subject may consult Dr James Legge's work on *The Religions of China* ; and I cannot close this part of my inquiry without expressing my sense of the debt due to Dr Legge in regard to this whole subject. He is (as far as an unlearned person may judge) impartial, and yet he is in love with his subject.

There has been no radical change in the Chinese character since the first century of our era. Let me quote, as exemplifying this, the evidence respecting the Chinese people of the missionaries Carpini and Rubruquis in the middle of the thirteenth century.

The following translations are from the work on China by R. K. Douglas, in the series entitled, *Story of the Nations*. Here, first, is what Carpini says of the Chinese (p. 27) :

They seem indeed to be kindly and polished folks enough. They have no beard, and in character of countenance have a considerable resemblance to the Mongols, but are not so broad in the face. They have a peculiar language. Their betters as craftsmen in every art practised by man are not to be found in the whole world. Their country is very rich in corn, in wine, in gold and silver, in silk, and in every kind of produce tending to the support of mankind.

And here is Rubruquis (p. 28) :

Those Cathayans are little fellows, speaking much through the nose, and, as is general with all those Eastern people, their eyes are very narrow. They are first-rate artists of every kind, and their physicians have a thorough knowledge of the virtues of herbs, and an admirable skill in diagnosis by the pulse. The common money of Cathay consists of pieces of cotton paper about a palm in length and breadth, upon which lines are printed resembling the seals of Mangu Khan (the third in succession from Jenghiz Khan) ; they do their writing with a pencil such as painters paint with, and a single character of theirs comprehends several letters so as to form a whole word.

Again in these passages, as in all those quoted before in this chapter, a people is described endowed with many excellent qualities ; a people industrious, intelligent, friendly. On the other hand, the Chinese character has not been well adapted to impose restraint on the vices of rulers, or to shake off customs of long standing when these are shown to be injurious. These defects are capable of being amended by intercourse with other nations ; and the positive proficiency of the Chinese in stability and force is an element that must never be forgotten, when the general progress of mankind is being recounted. Perhaps their greatest want has been in the region of idealism, of ardent love, of high enthusiastic hope reaching out into the far future. To send fire into the earth has not been their province.

If in this chapter I have said more about the Chinese character and philosophy than about the Chinese religion, this is because religious problems have been less to the forefront in China than problems of morality and of character. It is not that the Chinese have been, or are, irreligious. Certainly they are not atheistic, and the worship of parents and ancestors, which forms the greater part of their practical religion, is not devoid of true feeling, and even of some true instinct. But though there may be true instinct in it, the instinct is an imperfect one, and does not reach to the root of human nature. A real share in the development



of mankind has belonged to China ; but the most profound causes of development have lain elsewhere.

I must not close this chapter without some remarks on that other race of the far east, akin to the Chinese and yet different from them—the Japanese. Japan arrived at civilisation, and at conscious religion, much later than China. Tradition in Japan goes no further back than about 600 B.C., and though religion under the form of ancestor-worship existed from time immemorial, the softening of religion by morality, and the consequent removal of barbarous rites does not appear to have begun earlier than the Christian era<sup>1</sup>. The great refining influence of Buddhism was introduced into Japan about the sixth century of our era ; it existed for centuries side by side with the primitive religion of Japan, called Shinto-ism ; to-day it is declining as a creed, though the moral work that it has done is not small. As well as I can gather from what I have read on the subject, religion<sup>2</sup> and morality have not been marked by that strong originality in Japan which we find in China ; and yet it is difficult to say that the Japanese are inferior to the Chinese. The balance on the Japanese side is restored by the extraordinary power of initiative which the Japanese have always possessed, and in which the Chinese have been somewhat lacking. I cannot in the present work recount, even cursorily, the history of Japan ; but every reader of that history must be struck with the swiftness and energy of purpose which has always marked the Japanese conduct of affairs, in contrast with the comparatively slow and acquiescent type of the Chinese practical conduct. The Japanese repelled the great Mongol sovereign, Kubla Khan, who had conquered China ; they have always held their own as against foreign nations with singular independence, and I need not say what remarkable evidence their recent history has given, both of the power of internal change and of self-sacrifice and vigour in war. Yet it would be incorrect to think that these qualities, admirable though they are, reach to the profoundest depths of the human heart, or supply a foundation on which to build for eternity. To show how such a foundation can be attained, belongs to a future part of this work.

Meanwhile, in my next chapter I shall return from the far east to the west, and begin the account of religion as it existed in those nations which we call classical—the nations of Greece and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> See Lafcadio Hearn's *Japan : an Interpretation*, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> This is the impression that I have derived from Lafcadio Hearn's works ; and he was, I suppose, more intimately acquainted with Japan than any other European writer.

## CHAPTER VI

### ANCIENT RELIGION : GREECE

IN the foregoing chapters I have dealt with the religion of nations who were in their different ways famous before the Christian era, but whose fame to us of the twentieth century of the Christian era is much dimmed by the obscurities which time has thrown in our way, and by the scantiness of extant historical records. It is true that the history of China shines to us with a clearer light than the histories of India and Persia; and possibly if Chinese literature were better known to us, this superiority of China might be yet further accentuated, but I speak of history as it appears to us Europeans now, with our present means of knowledge. These three vast countries, when studied in their remote epochs, have a real store of spiritual light for us at the present day; but the details of their history are for the most part shrouded in darkness. Coming from the histories of ancient China, India or Persia, to the histories of Greece and Rome, is like leaving a scene of dim twilight for the full blaze of day. The history of Israel, to which I must presently come, may be placed, for clearness of illumination, intermediate between the history of China and the history of Greece. We know nearly as much about king David as we know about Socrates, or about Cæsar. But there is no other hero or prophet of Israel of whom this can be said; about Isaiah, for instance, we hardly know as much as we do about Confucius.

It is Greece, not Rome, to which the credit of this illuminating power chiefly belongs; for Greece initiated what Rome inherited. The early days of Roman history, from the times of the later kings onwards, seem to have been recorded more or less by contemporary annalists; but the vast range which belongs to the human intellect, and the infinite charm of literature and art, were wholly unsuspected by the Romans until, in the third century before Christ, they began by slow steps to derive instruction from the Greeks. Greece is as wonderful on the human side as Israel



is on the religious side, but the humanity of the Greek genius is very different from the solemn law-abiding tenderness which characterises the teaching of Buddha and Lâo-tsze and Confucius; it is full of vivid emotions which seek for a law but do not find a law. The Greek spirit vivified those who came under its influence abundantly, but it was imperfect on the side of ruling and guiding power; and yet the noblest Greek minds were ardently in search after that ruling and guiding power, the want of which was so manifest in the Greek race of their own day. The variety of the Greek impulses was in truth not favourable to the attainment by the entire race of dominating power in any single definite line, but the capacities of mankind, if not organised or made permanent by the Greek spirit, were most notably enlarged by it, more than by any other race in ancient times—and may we not also add, more than by any single nation in modern times?

Moreover, there was one particular kind of virtue, not in itself of a ruling character, but still indispensable to rulers, the virtue of a just scepticism, which owes its origin to the Greeks. Not to be too ready to say "I know"; to hold back from absolute assertions, where probability only is attainable; this is a very general characteristic of the Greek mind, and a salutary one. Hence it was that accurate science and accurate history took their rise in Greece, and the courage of Socrates brought this scepticism to bear on the highest subjects of human thought, religion and ethics. Had Socrates been an irreligious man, this scepticism would have been a destructive force in his hands; but religious feeling, and an obedient orderly spirit, were strong in him. All things considered, the influence of Socrates, though never recognised in such formal ways as the influence of Buddha and Confucius and Zoroaster, has been fully as great as that of any of those famous teachers. In Socrates, quite as much as in Buddha, we feel that we are approaching, though not attaining, the ultimate goal of a spiritual command which should gather all the emotions of men under its fostering charge.

With this explanatory preface, let me begin my sketch of the development of the spiritual elements in ancient Greece.

The primitive religion of the races inhabiting Greece, like the primitive religion of all Aryan races, was the worship of personified natural forces. Zeus was the god of the heaven; Poseidon, of the sea; Demeter, the goddess of the earth regarded as nourishing men; Gaia, the earth in a more general sense; Hades, the god of the regions below the earth, whither the shades of men

went after death; Hephæstus, the god of fire, especially of volcanic fires; Dionysus (who later was called Bacchus) the god of the vine, with its wonderful intoxicating force; Apollo, probably the god of the sun at all times, certainly from the time of Æschylus onwards; though this his central signification was sometimes forgotten (as for instance in Homer and Hesiod) amid the abundance of functions attributed to him. But the Greek mind, with its extraordinary rapidity of imagination, could not rest, as the poets of the Rig-Veda rested, in simple personification; the Greek gods became a picturesque assemblage of beings in no way differing from men, except in their greater power; beings who quarrelled and fought, who ate and drank, who married and begat children, who debated in political fashion, and formed political parties. This is the aspect of religion which we find in Homer; a most singular and unparalleled stripping away of mystery from the most mysterious of all subjects! Yet, with all the sensuous descriptions of divine things in Homer, it is plain that there was a certain subtlety in the Greek mind even at that date; or how else should we find Athena, the goddess of wisdom, in the list of Greek divinities? That is not quite an obvious conception to a rude race; nor perhaps is even Aphrodite, the goddess of love, an obvious conception to a mind from which an intellectual interest in the world is wholly absent. It was not for nothing that the Greeks sprang from the Aryan race, the race of nobles; an intrinsic breadth of conception belonged to them; but must we not add, with some rare exceptions, an intrinsic want of depth also?

When we seek to penetrate into the first formation of that people whom in their later development we call Hellenes or Greeks, and whom under either name we know so well, we are baffled by cross lights coming from many quarters with uncertain meanings. Hellas is recognised by Homer as but a small tract of country; the Hellenes as apparently but a small tribe; at least the only line of Homer in which they are mentioned with a more extensive signification was rejected in ancient times as spurious. Are we to suppose that this small tribe expanded until it filled the whole peninsula, casting out all its rivals? There is not the smallest scrap of legend or myth, much less of trustworthy history, testifying to such an expansion. How came it then that the whole race acquired the name of Hellenes? What was that other race whom we read of in very ancient times as overspreading not only Greece proper, but the islands and part of Asia Minor, the Pelasgians? What are we to think



of the Cretans in prehistoric times, and their recently discovered inscriptions, still undecipherable? We wander in mists when such questions as these are brought forward; but when we come to the Trojan war and to the chief poet of that time, Homer, a certain light does seem to dawn upon us. It is not easy to resist the impression that the Trojan war was an important reality, and that it had an immense unifying effect on all the inhabitants of the country which we now call Greece; though this unity must not be understood to be a unity of government, but of sentiment and finally of language. That the Trojan war had this great result, appears to have been the opinion of Thucydides, and it is not easy to think of any fact which could better give a start to that vital unity which (amid all varieties of government) held together Spartans and Athenians and Bœotians and Thessalians and many other tribes, as being essentially a single people. But the military unity achieved by the Trojan war would have been fleeting and transient, if the record of it had not been enshrined in noble works of literature; and out of a mass of lost literature these two great poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, survive as examples of that spiritual movement which first gave to Greece its worth and dignity. Epic poetry, sung by a thousand bards and culminating in two poems distinguished by no slight moral force, was a primary source and cause of the Greece which we know. Not, of course, that mere poetry could have had this effect; but poetry enshrining the memory of great and worthy actions had this effect.

We must then accept Homer and his compeers (and it matters little whether the transcendent poet who produced the *Iliad* was the same as the transcendent poet who produced the *Odyssey*, or whether certain books in either poem were added at a later date) as a chief origin of the spirit which made Greece one land and not many petty districts, each single and isolated; and this great service could not have been performed without the aid of religion. Crude as is the religion of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the crudeness of it would hardly strike men in an age so vigorous and so daring; and it elevated men above the narrow sphere of daily life. The morality, again, of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is imperfect, whether as relating to men or to gods, but inequalities in moral treatment can never surprise us; and the great interest of the two poems lies in the amount of genuine love, affection, faithfulness, and comradeship in service, which the poet elicits out of a groundwork of war and violent personal antagonisms.

The religion and morality taught by Homer do not lack power, but they do lack depth, and especially does the religion lack depth. This is not merely because it was polytheistic, though the polytheism was a hindrance; but it is plain that Homer shrank from definitely ascribing righteousness or goodness to the gods. The gods in Homer do on the whole favour the right side, and are evidently intended to do so, but the reasons which are represented as influencing the divine action are always of an adventitious, casual sort; the gods will favour a hero because he has offered to them in sacrifice thighs of oxen and goats; or they will disfavour him for adherence to the party whom they dislike; or Zeus weighs his fortune in the balances, and Fate assigns to him life or death. One would say that among the gods, as among the men, there is a preponderance of right feeling; but no saving power is attributed to righteousness; all men in the end succumb to Fate, and the shadowy existence of the dead is not apportioned according to any distinction drawn from their conduct in this life. No principle is ever affirmed in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, according to which the gods, either in this life or in a future life, recompense the good as good, and the bad as bad. Right feeling is abundant, but it never frames itself into moral principle of any kind.

From this kind of spiritual atmosphere diffused over the Greek race, it followed that the Greeks had abundance of sympathetic instincts, fitfully and often violently manifested, abundance of imaginative religion, but little consistency or government in spiritual matters. Nevertheless, the Greek race were always feeling after spiritual government, and even before the time of the composition of the Homeric poems, the great oracle of Delphi had begun to establish itself as a common centre for the whole race. We find Pytho (which is the same as Delphi) mentioned in the *Iliad* (ix. 405) as a rich temple of Apollo, but with no mention of its oracle; in the *Odyssey* it is mentioned as an oracle. Delphi did in fact displace Dodona, the most ancient and venerable of oracles, as the point of chief approach to the Deity for all the races inhabiting the land which we now name Greece; but Dodona never had the great authority of Delphi. The rise of Delphi is a proof that Greece was feeling after unity in spiritual matters; an effective centre was needed; and the neighbourhood of Delphi to the Peloponnesus (then and for long afterwards the most powerful part of the country in civil government) made its position advantageous. Dodona had been too



far off for general consultation, but Delphi was easily accessible, and the more so, because the rugged nature of the surrounding country made it unavailable for the abode of any people who should be politically strong. Moreover, one point which might have been regarded as advantageous to Dodona, the fact that its oracle was dedicated to the supreme God, Zeus, was in the general Greek feeling no advantage against Delphi, which was dedicated to Apollo. For Apollo was regarded as the interpreter of Zeus to men, and the imaginative Greek mind held it to be more suitable for the supreme Deity to issue his injunctions to men through an interpreter, than in his own proper person. The solemn, awe-striking look of Delphi, with its precipices and its chasm under the lofty summit of Parnassus, aided in enhancing its religious significance; and before long every great enterprise among the Greeks was held to require the sanction of the Delphic oracle before it could be launched into practical working.

But at this point I must go back and pick up another strand of primæval Greek history, which so far I have not mentioned. I may best do this by asking, as a preliminary, two questions:

Was the beginning of unity of feeling among the Greeks solely due to the valiant exploits of the Trojan war, and the brilliant poems which narrated that great event?

Was the supremacy of the Delphic oracle solely due to its central position and to the natural desire of all Greeks to have one ultimate religious guide?

No, these were not the sole causes; another cause joined in producing these results, and that was the Dorian strength. Without the Dorians, the feeling of unity among all those who waged the Trojan war would never have expressed itself in those famous names—of the country, Hellas; and of the people, Hellenes. Without the Dorians the Hellenic tongue would never have prevailed over the more ancient tongues, its rivals. Without the Dorians, the feeling of all Greeks for religious unity would never have concentrated itself in acknowledgment of the Delphic oracle. Lastly, without the Dorians the Greek race would never have had that desire for unity of government which, though they never really attained such unity, was so valuable to the whole race as an inspiration. It was the strength of the Dorians which gave to the entire Greek race the hard kernel of persistency; and though the most remarkable Greek qualities lay in the direction of sympathetic expansion and not of persistent strength, still for the accomplishment of what they did some persistent

strength was necessary; and this was contributed by the Dorians.

I must recount the history, in so far as the mists of antiquity permit us to discern it; and the best way of approaching it will perhaps be by quoting that single passage from Homer in which the Dorians are mentioned. The passage is in the *Odyssey* (xix. 175-179); it occurs in the description of the population of the island of Crete given by Ulysses (then in disguise) to his wife Penelope:

“Their tongue,” he says, “is diverse, of diverse races; among them are Achæans, among them are indigenous Cretans high-souled, and Cydones, and Dorians in their threefold division, and Pelasgians of divine origin. Among their cities is the great city of Cnosus, and there Minos reigned for nine years, he who conversed familiarly with great Zeus.”

The natural inference from this passage is, what we otherwise know to be a fact, that the Dorians were colonists in Crete and not indigenous; but as colonists they must have been powerful, or they would never have preserved their name and characteristics with such precision in foreign territory. “Indigenous Cretans” and “Cydones” need not occupy much of our attention here; but Achæans and Pelasgians lived side by side with Dorians in the mainland of Greece as well as in Crete, and formed parts of that community, diverse in origin, which was slowly being moulded into the Hellas of later times. Achæans and Dorians were nearly related, and both came from the north and pressed southwards; we read of them both in very early times in the region of Phthiotis, south of Thessaly, the very same region which was the home of the great warrior Achilles; it is Homer who tells us that Achæans occupied this tract, it is Herodotus who places the primitive Dorians there. But it was just in this little tract that the primitive Hellenes lived; and Homer uses language which implies so near a relationship between Achæans and Hellenes (*Iliad*, II. 684) as to suggest that the Achæans called themselves Hellenes. From Herodotus (I. 56) we may infer that the Dorians did the same. It would seem that the Achæans had pressed down into the Peloponnesus before the Trojan war, and the great host under the command of Agamemnon held large numbers of them; but the Dorians still remained in northern Greece, though it is likely that, even before the Trojan war, they had penetrated into the region round Mount Parnassus, and had sent colonies to Crete, and to other islands that studded the sea on the way to Crete. They held their strength in reserve, but the first great



evidence of it lay in their appropriation of the oracle of Delphi for their patron-god, Apollo. Delphi had long been an oracular shrine, but it had been tossed about, so to speak, between various deities, and as long as this was the case, the ancient Pelasgian shrine of Dodona preserved its supremacy. But the Dorians enthroned Apollo at Delphi; Dodona sank to the second place; and a new and powerful authority, of a religious kind, began to rule over Greece. Dorians from Crete, it would seem, united with Dorians on the mainland of Greece in effecting this change<sup>1</sup>.

Behold then the Dorians established in power, though hardly a recognised power; but one immediate result, even before the Trojan war, may be discerned in their effect on Athens and Attica. Herodotus tells us that the Athenians were originally Pelasgians, that is, that they belonged to the aboriginal inhabitants of Greece, who had never migrated (and all the evidence is to this effect); but that the natural superiority of the Hellenic language caused them to change their language from Pelasgic to Hellenic. We cannot but recognise some probability in this account; and when should the change take place but when the Dorians had established the worship of Apollo at Delphi, and thereby made the Hellenic tongue prevalent wherever Delphi was honoured? What now took place in Attica, took place presently over the whole Ionian race, to which the Athenians belonged; for the Athenians were bound by intimate ties with the Ionians of Asia Minor, and though the exact origin and meaning of the "Ionian race" is doubtful, the existence of the Ionian race is of course not to be questioned. The Ionians, though Pelasgic in origin, ceased to be Pelasgic in language, and became Hellenic. (Herodotus represents the Hellenic race as a branch of the Pelasgic race; if so, the languages would be akin; this, however, cannot be held certain.)

The Hellenic tongue and the Doric character were then beginning to win prominence in Greece, even before the Trojan war. But after the fall of Troy, the dynasties of the great chieftains who had carried on that war evinced the strain to which they had been subjected; they fell into comparative weakness,

<sup>1</sup> For the evidence that the Dorian race was the active power which established Apollo at Delphi, I may refer to the well-known and learned work of K. O. Müller on *The History of the Dorian Race*; the considerations adduced are too numerous and too subtle to be transferred to the present work. For the evidence as to the influence of the Achæans in bringing the Hellenic name into the Peloponnesus, I must refer to an article by J. B. Bury in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. xv. part II.: being the volume for the year 1895. The special reason suggested by Professor Bury for the predominance of the name "Hellenes" has not been adopted here, but is not impossible.

especially did the dynasty of the great king Agamemnon slowly succumb and disappear. The Dorian race, who had long waited at the doorstep of the Peloponnesus, seized the opportunity. Aided, it is said, by the survivors of an ancient Peloponnesian dynasty, the Herakleids, they entered the southern peninsula, and established themselves at Sparta, Messene, and Argos. With that successful blow the Dorian influence became supreme all over Greece and its colonies; and Sparta, the chief Dorian city, was looked up to as unquestionably the chief of Greek cities. Moreover monarchy, in its old form, now passed away from Greece, for the Dorians, without entertaining any formal objection to monarchy, were too much filled with the pride of collective superiority to endure a despotism, and henceforth there was no legitimate monarchy in Greece. Despots, under the name of tyrants, were not indeed uncommon at any period, but the universal feeling was against them, and no despot in the days when Greece was vigorous ever succeeded in establishing a dynasty.

The abolition of monarchy throughout Greece was then one consequence of the Dorian supremacy, and it may be observed that monarchy passed away from Ionian and Æolian cities quite as much as from Dorian cities. The Æolian race was indeed kindred with the Dorians, so that the same impulse might naturally affect both races; and as to the Ionians, their subtle, flexible, feminine temperament (Homer calls them *ἐλκεχίτωνας*, "trailing their tunics") would easily receive impressions from the stronger Dorian mood, which more and more ruled Greece as time went on. The strength of Athens had not yet been born. With all this it is to be observed that the Dorians had no professed antipathy to kings; Sparta, the chief Dorian city, had two kings to the very end of its famous history, but they were kings with but little power; the Ephors were the true rulers of Sparta. Neither were the Dorians adverse to the indigenous deities worshipped in any Greek state; but they insisted that Apollo should be worshipped as well as the indigenous deities, and hence we have at Athens temples of the Pythian Apollo and of the Delphian Apollo, both manifestly set up under Delphian influence; and the same is doubtless true of the temple of the "Paternal" Apollo. The Dorian deity became the Ionian deity, whether in the mainland of Greece, or in the islands of the Ægean, or on the coast of Asia Minor; though Apollo never displaced the goddess Athena (or Athenè) from the first place in the minds of the faithful Athenians.



Let me now recapitulate, in chronological order, the three causes which made of Greece one nation ; first, the great effort of the Trojan war, under Agamemnon and the ancient royal dynasties in feudal<sup>1</sup> subjection to Agamemnon ; next, the Dorian advance into southern Greece, and attainment of supremacy over the other Greeks ; and thirdly, the great power and brilliancy of the poetry, especially the epic poetry, which, two or three centuries after Troy had fallen, was everywhere sung in celebration of the heroes of that heroic age. It was the Ionian race which produced the epic poetry ; and it is evident that the Ionian race had an intrinsic literary and artistic power, which has done more for the permanent fame of Greece than all the military skill of the Dorians. The Æolian race had likewise its famous poets, of whom Sappho and Alcæus are the best known ; but the Dorian race had little preeminence in this way. A certain narrowness characterises the Dorian temperament, and the Lycurgæan legislation at Sparta drew some of its strength from this narrowness, but it proved fatal in the end to the permanent supremacy of Spartans over Greece ; they never renovated their race by taking new blood into it. Yet when this narrowness is allowed for, the Spartans had great qualities of faithfulness and moderation, at any rate in dealing with their equals.

Dorian, Æolian, Ionian ; under these names we recognise the three chief motive powers of rising Greece, during the seventh and sixth centuries before Christ. All around the Ægean sea, at Cyrene on the north coast of Africa, all over the south of Italy, even as far as Marseilles in France, the Greek colonies grew, and ever attained greater splendour. At what precise period the people first recognised their unity, and called themselves Hellenes, in contradistinction to the foreigner of strange speech outside them, we cannot certainly affirm. But we can see and wonder at the living force that was among them all. At so ancient an era as the ninth century before Christ, it would appear that there were games held at Olympia in the north of the Peloponnesus, under religious sanction ; and though it is not likely that the competitors were drawn from so extensive an area as was afterwards the case, the very idea of such a festival bears witness to a certain peaceful and amicable energy than which nothing can be more valuable. We have, of course, to remember all the drawbacks of that state of society ; the frequent violences, the sensualities, the tendency more and more to thrust women into

<sup>1</sup> The word "feudal" is not quite exact here, but is not far from the truth.

a low position, the existence of slaves who were not thought to have any rights of their own ; in spite of all this, we may justly admire the growing sense of a common Hellenic feeling, evinced in a common religious worship, common festivals, common games and peaceful contests, a common delight in poetry, sculpture, architecture, and presently in dramatic spectacles, and in the art of painting ; also in exercises of the intellect, in attempts to understand this mysterious world in which we live, the causes of physical changes upon earth, the true nature of the sun and moon and stars. No nation ever rushed so speedily into such a field of varied and genuinely delightful exercises, bodily and mental, as the Greek nation between the years 700 and 500 B.C.; and every part of this varied exercise was placed under religious sanction, and it was believed that the Gods approved of it and took delight in it. How can we ourselves fail to applaud such a conviction, even while we know that there was much in Greek society which was alien to divine love and mercy, and acknowledge that the Hebrew prophet who sighed and wept over the misdoings of his fellow-countrymen came nearer to the centre of moral truth than the Greek poet or sculptor or athlete who rejoiced in the Hellenic world as the very abode of light ? After all, there were some grave and serious spirits among the Greeks, who did not ignore the lessons of sorrow, and who preferred the power of ruling one's own soul to the acquisition of any amount of external happiness.

That the Greeks of the sixth century before Christ were bound to experience sorrow, and were almost certain to experience defeat in one quarter or another, we may easily see. They had fringed the greater part of the shores of the eastern Mediterranean with their cities ; here and there (though not frequently) penetrating into the inland countries. Wherever they went, other races of foreign speech (called by the Greeks " barbarians ") had been before them, and war was the natural condition between the invading Greeks and the original inhabitants of these countries. In such a war, the Greeks would have some superiority as long as they were within easy reach of the coast-line, but not in the inland parts, where they would be comparatively out of reach of their own countrymen, and where supplies, in case of need, would not easily reach them. The necessity of restricting their colonies to the near neighbourhood of the coast was then one circumstance which hindered the expansion of the Hellenic race ; and another circumstance which hindered their expansion



was the difficulty of making very long voyages, in consequence of the fear which men without maps or compasses felt of abandoning the coast-line and committing themselves to the open sea. It followed, that when the Greeks could no longer expand outwards, they were driven by that struggle for existence, which so often tragically hinders human progress, to contend with each other for ground which was no longer adequate to an expanding population. This dire necessity of mutual contention was held off (as far as our information permits us to judge) in the seventh century before Christ; even in the sixth century it was not very urgent; but in the fifth century, after the Persian wars, it became urgent, and it was sharpened by the fact that whereas in the previous centuries there had been only one leading state, Sparta, there were now two leading states, Sparta and Athens, and the vigorous Athenian character was not disposed to exercise that consideration towards subjects or towards rivals which so delicate a situation demanded. All this was natural enough; it was no special fault of the Greeks that they were brought face to face with difficulties which are deeply implicated in the whole nature of man, and in his position as a living creature upon the earth's surface. But the worth of a race, as of an individual man, is tested by the way in which difficulties are met. What are we to say of the way in which the Greeks met this very serious difficulty, the limitation of their area of settlement and expansion?

I think we may fairly say that in most respects the Greeks were better fitted to meet the outside world, better able to grapple with those difficulties which are inherent in the condition of man, at the beginning of the fifth century before Christ, than they had been in the Homeric age, or at any period since that era. But there were two circumstances of their condition in which there had been no advance, but retrogression or rigid stationariness; the first being the sexual relations prevalent among them; the second, the political type of the then leading state, Sparta. It will be well to show more exactly how the case stood, both as regards advance and as regards retrogression.

The advance consisted in the extraordinary development of sympathy and of power in so many fields of which I have already spoken; in the intercourse which made every part of the Hellenic world responsive to every other part; in the penetrating intellect which so many philosophers, Thales, Pythagoras, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, had brought to bear on the whole sphere of reality; in the growing conviction that the world was

governed by the Gods under moral laws. By the time of Pindar, at the very close of the period of which I speak, the superstitious and extravagant parts of the Greek mythology were beginning to give way, as we may see from the first Olympian ode of that great poet; and yet no universal destructive scepticism had begun to mingle with the salutary sense that the Gods must not be accredited with evil passions. The way of truth was in many respects beginning to open before the Greeks; but the profound difficulty which lay at the very entrance of that way was as yet unsuspected by them. Of the philosophers of this era, Pythagoras and Heraclitus would seem to have been the nearest to the apprehension of that true solvent of all human problems, love acting through self-denial; but the approach even of Pythagoras and Heraclitus to this great truth was very imperfect, although it is of course right to add that we know little of the actual lives of those two philosophers. On the whole, the Greeks of this early period are memorable for true instincts in a stage of immature development.

After saying this, however, it is necessary to notice those parts of the Greek character which were retrograde or stationary. Their retrogression lay chiefly in the relation between the sexes. Of all human relations, the sexual relations are the most subtle. It appears to be true, that not only men, but some animals and a large number of birds, have the feeling of a permanent emotional relation (which we may rightly call spiritual) as the counterpart of that physical connexion which is natural between the sexes. It is unfortunate that the animals patronised by man, whom we regard as tame, appear to lose the sense of this spiritual counterpart. I speak under much ignorance, but I never heard of a dog having a bitch for its permanent mate. But I believe that the lion has special affection for its mate, the lioness<sup>1</sup>; the male for the female swallow. The development of this spiritual relation is one of the most important things in the whole world. That there are many obstacles to its development, every one is aware; and the Greeks, whose delicacy of perception might have enabled them to foster spiritual attachment between man and woman, had fallen, at some period after the Trojan war, into serious error in respect of this whole subject. We do not know the history of the matter; but whereas in the times which Homer

<sup>1</sup> We must distinguish between this special affection, and the general tenderness which the males of any species may have for the females. In an interesting imaginative work, *White Fang*, this is brought out strongly as a characteristic of wolves; and I suppose that the author has knowledge.



describes, and probably more or less in the times when Homer sang, women appear to have possessed a certain freedom, though subjected to the violences of a rude age, this freedom had not remained unimpaired during the centuries which followed. The woman, indeed, who was content to lead a licentious life, had still great chances of freedom, for no man had a peculiar and special interest in her; but the married woman was placed under more rigid control than had formerly been customary. The married woman was looked upon more and more as the possession, less and less as the companion, of her husband. It is true that this change did not take place in Sparta as much as in other Greek cities; and it is true also that, in every Greek city, personal character must have operated more or less in modification of the general rule. The noble heroines in some of the Greek tragedies, such as Antigone and Alcestis, could hardly have been depicted by poets who had not known brave and worthy women in actual existence; the wife of Ischomachus, of whom Xenophon tells us, was treated with courtesy and respect by her husband; and Xanthippe, whatever her faults, was not servile. Still, on the whole, during the time of which I am speaking, women had become subject to injurious restriction, and this had actually come through the advance of civilisation; for the same causes which enabled a man to keep his property more securely, enabled him also to keep his wife more securely, and therefore under greater restraint. The liberty of men did not imply the liberty of women.

A condition in itself unfortunate was made worse by the practice which the Greeks adopted as a remedy. Spiritual union between husband and wife had been lowered in its character; irregular unions between man and woman were essentially unsatisfactory. But spiritual union between man and man was capable of great intensity; and it appeared the finest flower of happiness to combine spiritual affection between man and man with something like that physical union which a man may have with a woman. The practice prevailed not among the Greeks alone; but we must more regret it among the Greeks than in any other nation, because of their distinguished qualities. (The Spartans, Xenophon tells us, were pure in this respect.) It may seem strange, but it is true, that a practice which is justly condemned as weakening to body and soul, and which is regarded as abominable in modern times, was among the Greeks not incapable of being combined with genuinely lofty feelings. The

evidence does, I think, warrant us in saying this; but it was impossible that this should be a general result of the practice; and it did, on the whole, contribute most materially to the downfall of the Greek race. Of all its results, the degradation of family life which resulted from it was probably the worst. Though it is true that the relations involved in family life are not absolutely the deepest which the human mind can conceive, yet there is no external relation so capable of administering to the deepest and most enduring phases of sentiment as family life; to corrupt the family tie means the endangering of the welfare of the entire community. Even the greatest Greek philosophers, though they did condemn that harmful practice of which I have spoken, hardly perceived how great a reform was needed in this part of the Greek mind. Did we desire to see how far wrong a very great philosopher is capable of going, when he treats of the relations between the sexes, the fifth book of Plato's *Republic* would give us ample evidence. Yet, it should be added, that Plato spoke much more soundly on the subject of marriage in his last treatise, the *Laws*, than in the *Republic*; and everywhere the duty of restraining intemperate desires is very seriously felt by him (as by his master, Socrates, and by his pupil, Aristotle). But a more vivid energy in dealing with the faults of the Greeks was needed than any philosopher among them put into play.

To return to the sixth century before Christ. The Greek character of that time, though in some ways noble and progressive, was retrograde in the way just mentioned. To this most serious disadvantage another disadvantage must be added; namely that Sparta, the unquestioned chief at that time of Hellenic peoples, was so rigidly conservative as to debar all political progress in that quarter. Whence it followed that the remaining Hellenic states were greatly hampered in their political progress also; for the example of Sparta, and the prejudices of Sparta, were exceedingly powerful. There was much that was truly worthy of admiration in Sparta throughout her whole history, but the world has hardly ever seen such an example of the evil wrought by mere conservatism; for if the ruling tribe of Spartans had once consented to share their power with the countryfolk of Laconia, as the Roman patricians consented to share theirs with the Roman plebeians, the whole course of Greek history would have been altered, and the internal quarrels of other Greek states would have been greatly mitigated. It is impossible not to add that the Spartan authorities are accused



of fortifying their own oligarchic rule by acts of secret treachery and murder ; we must in part credit this (see an instance recorded in the 80th chapter of the fourth book of Thucydides); and considering the eminence of Sparta, few things can have contributed more to the downfall of Greek virtue and of Greek power.

There is nothing which so forcibly brings before the mind the fact that man has a sinful nature, resulting in actual sins and actual degeneration (if it be not checked), as such examples as those which I have just given of ill-doing on the part of men who really desired to progress in excellence and virtue, who in many respects deserve our admiration, and who yet in their ignorant cupidity clutched at methods and practices which could only bring destruction with them. It is among such difficulties as these that mankind are placed ; we cannot altogether refuse to follow our natural impulses, and yet danger is intricately woven in them. Of all parts of human history, Greek history is that which is most filled with examples of the frailty which accompanies human activity.

The religious minds among the Greeks were not unaware of this danger to their race, and they strove to introduce correctives of it. The Greek conscience was not so sensitive of sin as the Hebrew conscience, but it was not insensitive. In Homer, we find the singular combination of a sensitiveness to sin with an assumption that the sinful impulse cannot be resisted ; this double feeling is called *Atè* (infatuation) ; thus Helen admits without a blush her own wrong-doing in eloping with Paris, but evidently thinks that she could not have helped committing the sin, and Menelaus her husband, having recovered her, seems to acquiesce in this view. But by the sixth century before Christ a desire for purity had entered the Greek mind, a sense that " we must strive even now to realise our affinity with God<sup>1</sup>," which must be accounted a real advance on the lines of duty. It was in the Orphic religious societies, with their mystical ceremonies and their teaching as to the destiny of the soul, that this movement began ; a movement which ran into many extravagances and was liable to be darkened by imposture, but which had true value at the core. That the great poet Pindar belonged to one of the Orphic communities, we have no reason to say ; but in the second of his Olympian odes, he declares the happiness of the virtuous after death in famous and beautiful lines ; and

<sup>1</sup> I quote this expression from the work on *The Religious Teachers of Greece*, by James Adam.

after death, also, shall evil-doers (he says) receive punishment for their misdeeds ; and such teaching as this was no doubt a part of that instruction which was given by the Orphic communities, as well as in the Eleusinian mysteries. Even as expressed by Pindar, we have to recognise something of the superfluities of fancy in his description ; but his seriousness, and his individual conviction of the essential truth of what he says, are not to be doubted. We must not disparage such teaching, imperfect though it necessarily was ; and the Pythagorean brotherhoods, which had their start in the sixth century, were another evidence of something that was felt to be needed on the lines of religious duty.

Whatever her drawbacks, Greece in the sixth century before Christ was teeming with ardour ; and I need not tell my reader that that ardour did not come to an end with the sixth century. When we think of Greece, it is of Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ that we chiefly think ; and when we think of the leading state of Greece, it is not of Sparta that we think, but of another state. The career of Athens and of the Athenian people was a mighty explosion of human genius ; too violent to last, and mingled with so many crimes and follies as greatly to dim and chequer the liking and affection which the name of Athens at first arouses in us ; but in the end we must confess that hardly any part of the world's history is so interesting and so pathetic as the two centuries of which I have spoken, and the little country of Attica as the central point of their interest and pathos. In ancient times, only the narrow thread of living gold, which runs through the history of Israel, surpasses Attica in the ways I have named.

It cannot be doubted that the bold political reform of Solon was the beginning of the power of Athens. It was really Solon, at the beginning of the sixth century before Christ, who made Athens a democracy ; not so much by his political constitution, as by his law which at one stroke abolished all debts. So wonderful a law was perhaps never conceived by the human brain, or carried out by the human will. But it was done ; and wonderful to relate, it succeeded. It was conceivable that it might have multiplied the quarrels, the intestine wars, of the Athenian people tenfold ; only happily it did not do so. It would be too much, indeed, to say that it gave peace to Athens ; but it gave life and spirit to the poorest citizen, and it was accepted with acquiescence. We can only conclude that Solon, with the eye of



genius, saw what his city needed. As to the constitution which Solon gave the Athenians, it was good as a type, as a promise, as an ideal for the future; but the Athenians were not as yet strong enough to work it. It was not long afterwards (before Solon's death, it would appear) that they fell under the power of one of those plausible despots, who often acquired the government over Greek cities, and who often deserved some respect. Peisistratus was the despot in this case, and his sons, Hippias and Hipparchus, succeeded him peaceably in the government; nor does it appear that they were bad rulers, at least naturally. But circumstance, as well as natural disposition, has a power in the way of influencing rulers, so as to make them good or bad in their rule; and so it proved in this case. Hipparchus was slain in a private quarrel, and from that moment Hippias became severe and suspicious. The Athenians, remembering the promise of freedom which had come to them from Solon's legislation, chafed under the yoke, and at last the way to deliverance was found.

It so happened that the temple of Apollo at Delphi had been burnt down—this had happened before the death of Hipparchus; and now one of the wealthy Athenian families, the Alcmaeonids, who being opponents of Peisistratus and his sons had been banished from Athens, offered their services in rebuilding the temple. The contract was at first one simply of a business nature; but the Alcmaeonids performed their part with such splendour as to merit real gratitude from the people of Delphi and from the Amphictyons (the board of governors, as in modern phrase we should style them, in charge of the temple). Cleisthenes, the head of the Alcmaeonid family, acquired in this manner great influence at Delphi; and that influence was presently exercised in a way which was, at any rate, natural. Athens, and the oppressed inhabitants of Athens, became suddenly dear to Delphi; and the Spartans, who were not only the most powerful people in Greece, but also the most conspicuous in their obedience to the Delphic oracle, presently found that on all occasions when they consulted the oracle, they received but one answer: "they must set Athens free." It was an injunction by no means agreeable to Sparta, for the Spartans had been on friendly terms with Peisistratus, and had continued their friendship with his sons, and they ignored the bidding of Apollo as long as they dared do so. But after a time they found they had to face the situation, and they obeyed the oracle. Their first expedition for the

deliverance of the Athenians was not successful ; for Hippias had managed to secure the assistance of a body of Thessalian cavalry, who repelled the Spartans. But a second and more powerful expedition proved effective. Hippias had to retire from Athens to Asia Minor ; he was strong enough to be able to secure a peaceable departure for himself, though some of his adherents afterwards felt the vengeance of the Athenians ; and Athens was free. This great crisis of Athenian history was reached in the year 510 B.C., the same year (if we may trust the ordinary reckoning) in which the Romans cast off their kings and became a republic.

“Then,” says Herodotus, “it was seen that liberty is an excellent thing for a nation.” Herodotus was right as regards those cases in which the nation has real force ; and Athens had real force, and was resolved to use it. Cleisthenes, who until then had been an aristocrat, joined the rising tide of democracy, and framed for the Athenians a truly democratic constitution ; and this time the Athenians were resolved that their constitution should not be filched away from them, as the Solonian constitution had been. They stretched out arms of strength, and made themselves felt, outside the boundaries of Attica, by Bœotians and other surrounding peoples ; and made even the Spartans, half repentant of their aid already given to Athens, hold them in respect. But it was not in such petty conflicts as these that Athens was to win a world-wide fame. The conflict with Persia was looming ahead.

Yet it was very far from being a premeditated design of the Athenian people, or even of their most clear-sighted statesmen, to challenge the mighty empire of Persia to a duel. It is true that the Athenians probably underrated the power of Persia ; their immediate feeling, when Sparta began to threaten them, was that Persia might perhaps be a useful ally against Sparta, and they actually made proposals to the Persians to this effect. The Persian satrap, who received these overtures with profound astonishment, expressed his contempt in an appropriate manner, and the first flame of indignation against the Persians was kindled in the Athenian breast. It so happened that the Ionians, kindred to the Athenians, who were living in their flourishing cities on the coast of Asia Minor, were subject to the Persians ; it was the only part of the world where Greek communities obeyed a non-Hellenic master, and they obeyed very reluctantly, remembering an independence which had been torn from them



in days well within the memory of their old men. About ten years after the expulsion of Hippias from Athens, these Ionians rebelled; and they asked help first from the Spartans, who refused it, and next from the Athenians, who granted it. A force of Ionians and Athenians united in a march up to the great city of Sardis, in the centre of Asia Minor, and as the houses of the city were generally either built of wickerwork or thatched with reed, it was easy to apply fire to them, and the city was set on fire and almost destroyed. But Persian armies were near at hand, and Ionians and Athenians, having done this feat, fled back precipitately. Probably the Athenians could give no solid help against so powerful a foe, who had a natural command of the country; at any rate they made no further attempt in this direction. The poor luckless Ionians were overwhelmed and severely punished; and then Darius, the great and famous Persian king, of whose character and exploits I spoke in a previous chapter, ruler of all the lands between India and the Mediterranean sea, asked the question: "But who are the Athenians?" It was explained to him who they were; and then he gave directions that the Athenians should be subjugated and punished, even as had been done to the Ionians.

It must be a matter of wonder to us, even at the present day, why the Persians could not accomplish that conquest which Darius so lightly commanded, and which, after his failure, was essayed by his son Xerxes with such extraordinary accumulation of efforts. The battles of Marathon, Thermopylæ, Salamis, and Plataea, stand on the pages of history as the evidences of the Persian failure; and the valour of the Greeks in those battles is not for a moment to be denied; but we have no reason at all to say that the Persians were cowards. Nevertheless, when the slow but exceedingly valiant Spartans united in one cause with the swift, ardent and dexterous Athenians, and when both were supported by a fair number of the other Greek states, and when every state that joined the cause sent out all its forces, the combination was a strong one. Yet it is not always appreciated by the reader of history how very nearly the Greeks came to being defeated; how unstable was their equilibrium; how narrow was the verge within which it was possible for them to act in effective union. Salamis was the critical battle; and it is very likely true that, if the battle of Salamis had been put off for a week, the Greek fleet would have dissolved of itself, and all Greece would have fallen a prey to Persia. It was under not very

dissimilar circumstances that the Ionian fleet had been defeated ; for the Ionians also had been subject to internal dissensions, and the ruin of their cause had been brought about by looseness of fibre from within quite as much as by the hosts of the Persians from without. Happily, when the Greek fleets were assembled at Salamis, their coherence, though imperilled, remained unbroken; the battle in fact was forced by the Persian attack, and when that had once begun there was no thought of disunion among the Greeks. We are told by Herodotus that the Persian attack was hastened by the subtlety of Themistocles, the Athenian commander, who, having the evidence before his eyes of the imminence of the Greek danger through the mutual disunion of the different states, conveyed a secret message to Xerxes, representing himself as a well-wisher to the Persians, and informing him that now was the time to crush the whole Greek force at once. Xerxes fell into the trap, and made the attack which proved the ruin of the Persians. Themistocles has had rather an ambiguous reputation in after ages, owing to the suspicion of double-dealing and selfishness which has attached to him ; but it is undeniable that his counsels saved Athens, and that in saving Athens he saved Greece. The singular wisdom and boldness of the course of which he was the true author, and to which he persuaded the Athenians, namely, to disregard the safety of their material city and take refuge in their ships, transporting their wives and families to the island of Ægina, has not always been appreciated as it deserves. This advice came nominally from the Delphic oracle, and those who look at the account in Herodotus (vii. 140-144) will see that the oracle was not without some credit in the matter ; the terms in which the oracle conveyed its advice, that the Athenians were to trust to their " wooden walls," are famous. It is permissible to believe that Themistocles, as he certainly interpreted this oracle in the sense which proved salutary, so also suggested in some manner the purport of it ; though no doubt the prophetic (and ambiguous) form came from Delphi. Herodotus also tells us that it was Themistocles who persuaded the Athenians to build their fleet in the first instance (this was anterior to the Persian wars); a memorable counsel, as if the fleet had not been built, Athens, and Greece too, would assuredly have gone under in the critical hour ! Of all Greek statesmen of any age, with the single exception of Solon, Themistocles appears to me the greatest ; though his rival and comrade, Aristides, may have been more blameless, and Pericles was certainly more



magnificent. Miltiades, the Athenian commander at Marathon, was another to whom an incalculable debt was owing. Leonidas, the Spartan king, who fell at Thermopylæ, ought not to be unnamed in any mention of these events ; but he was scarcely the equal of the great Athenians.

The Persian war was over ; Greece was saved ; but Greece was now essentially a duality, not a unity. The energy of Athens had been so conspicuous during the war, the wisdom and moderation of her statesmen had been so great, that her leadership was felt all over Greece to be a rival to the leadership of Sparta ; and if Sparta was still held to be superior in land warfare, Athens plainly took the lead at sea. Hence almost immediately the islands of the Ægean, with insignificant exceptions, became nominally the allies, really the subjects, of Athens. The splendid age of Pericles ensued ; an age of oratory and poetry, of architecture and sculpture, of citizen life and philosophic thought, such as the world had never seen before. Athens—and not only Athens, but Greece—was at its acme of power and splendour.

Alas ! such splendour is but a flower ; and it became very soon manifest that no genuine root of permanent progressive life, operative in politics and society generally, existed either in Athens or in Sparta, or anywhere in Greece. Athens and Sparta, under the pressure of that inevitable question, “ Which is the greater ? ” glided slowly into war. I need not recapitulate here that tragic history ; but let me record the single gleam of light at its close, which saved mankind from the occurrence of a still greater and irremediable tragedy. Athens, after incredible exertions, and, it must be admitted, also after incredible acts of folly, had fallen ; the subtle Spartan general, Lysander, had caught her in his net ; the beautiful city, that had almost attained imperial rule, surrendered perforce to her enemies. What would those enemies do with her ? Often and often, in the previous history of mankind, and in the subsequent history too, did such enemies destroy the object of their hate utterly. Thus had Nineveh been destroyed, and thus had Sybaris been destroyed, and thus had Jerusalem been destroyed (for the renascence of Jerusalem after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar was wholly unforeseen and wholly unlikely by any ordinary standard of probability). Would not Athens be destroyed in accordance with those lamentable precedents ? So the Thebans desired, and the Corinthians ; but Sparta had the supreme voice in the matter, and the Spartans nobly replied that they would never consent to

the destruction of a city which had done such services to Greece as Athens had done in the Persian war.

By this reply of the Spartans, the mind of Greece, the genius of Greece, the noble works of Greece in literature and art, were saved for all future generations of mankind. For would anything of them have been saved, if Athens had then been destroyed? It is not likely.

Greece, in its true spiritual element, survived and survives still; but the material power of Greece was even then on the way to extinction. Sparta was suffering (as Aristotle tells us) from "fewness of men"; the ruling Spartan race had not been replenished from outside, and the "polyandry" (the converse of polygamy) which was unfortunately prevalent there, also tended to lessen the number of the population. Hence the unquestioned Spartan supremacy over Greece, after Lysander's victory, was shortlived; thirty-three years, or a single generation, was the measure of it. Then Thebes, under the heroic Epaminondas, became for nine years the leading Greek state; but when Epaminondas was slain in the battle of Mantinea, in the year 362 B.C., Greece had no longer within its bounds any state or city of which it could be said, "Herein lies guidance." Xenophon, in the impressive close of his history, the *Hellenica*, notes and laments the fact that, after such arduous struggles, there was not anywhere any true chieftainship over the Hellenic race, which had been so long expecting a chief.

The issue came in a manner that neither Xenophon nor any of his contemporaries had expected. Philip of Macedon, the strong, subtle despot, ruling over a people only half Hellenic, hung over Greece from the north; and he employed his intellectual power in gathering together and drilling an army such as no mere citizen army could withstand; and as he was bent on conquest alone, and the Greeks (and above all the Athenians) were interested in many things, it was not wonderful that Philip, when at last he swooped down, conquered the Greeks. The great orator Demosthenes in vain tried to animate his countrymen with force to contend against their mighty antagonist. Philip was assassinated shortly after he had won his great victory—that dishonest victory at Chæronea, fatal to liberty, as Milton calls it; but a mightier than Philip succeeded to the throne. Alexander had had the instruction of Aristotle; he accounted himself not merely a Greek, but as the typical Greek, destined to avenge the ancient wrongs of Greece upon the old enemy



of Greece, Persia. I need but remind the reader of the well-known story; how Alexander, after annihilating Thebes (the only Greek city which had ventured to rebel against the Macedonians) led his army (moderate in size but perfectly disciplined) into the heart of Asia; how he overthrew the Persian army and everywhere replaced Persian rule by Greek rule; how under his overwhelming onset the famous religion which called itself by the name of Zoroaster vanished into corners and was lost for a time to the sight of men; how he implanted Greek settlers all over western Asia and Egypt, and made Greek language and learning dominant over those vast tracts; how, having effected a work which in its external aspect was one of the greatest that any man ever did, he died at the early age of thirty-two, of a fever, at Babylon. The one Greek achievement which Alexander was unable to renew, create, or transplant into any single spot of his vast empire, was the Greek political liberty. This the Greeks had lost; deservedly we must own; and few of the warlike despots who followed Alexander as his successors have any claim to our attention as part of the divine legacy of Greece to mankind.

But the spiritual force which mankind owe to Greece was openly active among mankind for many centuries after Alexander; and though lost to view in that strange twilight of thought which we call the mediæval period, has been revived in modern times, and influences us still. To this then I must now recur. But the theme is so great as to deserve a chapter to itself, and the present chapter, which has given as it were the framework of the subject, may well terminate here.

## CHAPTER VII

### ANCIENT RELIGION : THE HELLENIC QUEST AFTER TRUTH

It is of the religion of Greece, as it emerged out of mere naïve mythology into its final development, that this chapter must treat; and I will begin by speaking of the Delphic oracle. How far that oracle, the most marked centre of Greek religion, was animated by true sentiment and real uplifting of the heart from man to God, is hardly possible for us now to tell. That it had its delusive side, in which it made use of verbal quibbles, we know; that it had its worldly-wise side, and its secret sources of information, is probable; and when Greece was invaded by sceptical philosophy, about the middle of the fifth century before Christ, the oracle began slowly to lose its commanding reputation. Yet out of the midst of that very scepticism a hand was reached out, which did to a certain extent preserve the honour of the oracle.

The event of which I am about to speak happened, as we cannot doubt, before the Peloponnesian war began; and it may justly be said that the Delphic oracle, before it fell, bequeathed its authority to a new order of things, and pointed the way to a type of character, and to a method of religious inquiry, which could not possibly have belonged to any formal priesthood. The way in which this came about was through its utterance as regards Socrates. Of that utterance there are two versions, slightly differing; let me quote both. First let me give the version as Plato reports it, in the account which he gives of the apology or public defence of Socrates, when tried before the Athenian people; it runs thus:

You must have known Chærephon; he was early a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, for he shared in the exile of the people, and returned with you. Well, Chærephon, as you know, was very impetuous in all his doings; and he went to Delphi and boldly asked the oracle to tell him whether—(as I was saying, I must beg you not to interrupt)—he asked the oracle to tell him whether there was any one wiser than I was,



and the Pythian prophetess answered, that there was no man wiser. Chærephon is dead himself; but his brother, who is in court, will confirm the truth of this story. Jowett's *Dialogues of Plato*, vol. i. p. 335.

The other version occurs in the apology of Socrates as reported by Xenophon:

Chærephon once, in the presence of many witnesses, put a question at Delphi concerning me, and Apollo answered that there was no human being more liberal, or more upright, or more temperate than myself. *The Works of Xenophon*, by H. G. Dakyns, vol. III. part i. p. 189.

The Platonic version is no doubt the correct one here; but the question arises, how came the Delphic oracle to know anything at all about Socrates? The answer is, that the age was one in which sceptical opinions were growing; and sceptical though Socrates himself was, he yet welcomed and did not abandon religion, as it was practically held in his own country, including the reverence for Delphi. In a self-confident age a wise man had been found who was not self-confident, but who trusted in the Gods; and the fact was sufficiently remarkable to have attracted attention, even at Delphi. If this account of the matter be true, it must raise our opinion of the Delphic oracle; we shall perceive in it a seriousness of intention; but after all it is Socrates who must attract our highest interest, and it is his position as a man and as a teacher that I must now proceed to examine. But, first, to speak of his predecessors.

Except the dimly seen figure of Pythagoras, there is not among the Greeks before Socrates any nameable person, whose influence can possibly be held to have had its strong animating centre in religion; and even of Pythagoras little can be said in this connexion. The Greeks were religious, but religion entered into their lives as one of many various and complex influences; and hence we must not be surprised if, in the days before rationalism began to affect the Greek mind, the poets are they who give us the most striking examples of religious seriousness. By Æschylus and Sophocles the heathen mythology is used in such a way that pure religion shines through it; the mythology is assumed without questioning, but the morality of those two poets, which is in many respects very profound, is not dependent on the mythology; a mysterious goodness is ascribed to the supreme Powers which rule all things. Thus the Chorus in the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, after briefly referring to Uranus and Cronus, who were said to have preceded Zeus as rulers of the immortals, proceed

to speak of Zeus in terms which seem to imply that he is the true and only author of divine judgments:

“He who in triumphal tones calls on Zeus”—thus their song runs—“shall obtain perfect wisdom; Zeus, who guides men in the way of knowledge, who has laid down the inviolable law that through suffering comes experience.”

That is a monotheistic passage written by a poet who was apparently a polytheist; and the numerous passages in Æschylus which speak of the just retribution of woe to the sinner, are all based on a belief in mysterious divine powers which either are unnamed or which centre in Zeus. It is true that in the *Prometheus Bound*, and in the three plays which collectively are called the *Oresteia*, Æschylus does set great store by the mythology; but in each case it is with the intention of showing that peace and harmony are the ultimate purpose of the divine will, and that Zeus is conducting all things to this end. We see that this is the case in the *Oresteia*, and though the play is lost which would have brought the *Prometheus Bound* to its full end, we know that in that case also a harmonious result was attained under the will of Zeus.

The mythology is as much accepted by Sophocles as by Æschylus, though not as much dwelt upon; but even more than Æschylus does Sophocles use phrases which in their simple religious trust recall the Bible. “Take courage, my child, take courage,” say the Chorus to the despairing Electra; “Zeus is still mighty in heaven, he who beholds and governs all things; to whom submit the anger that torments thee; be not overmuch afflicted by thy foes, and yet forget them not.” In a similar tone Antigone, after burying her brother contrary to the prohibition of Creon, speaks to the tyrant:

It entered not my mind that thy proclamations were of such power, that thou a mortal shouldest override the unwritten and unshakable laws of the Gods; those laws are not of to-day or yesterday, but are eternal, and no man knows whence they came into being.

So too the Chorus in the *Ædipus Tyrannus* pray for “a pious purity of word and deed, according to the lofty laws of which heaven is the sole father: great is God in these and groweth not old.” Great too was the indignation of Sophocles against blasphemers of the Gods; as appears in the sequel of the chorus just quoted, and also in the *Ajax*. A gentle yet strong spirit was he; the Athenians once made him, in reward for his poetry, an admiral; but they had the good sense to give him Pericles as



a colleague in actual service. However, he would no doubt have fought bravely, as Æschylus did at Marathon.

Those who, after reading the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles, proceed to read those three solemn and affecting Platonic works, which narrate the trial, imprisonment, and death of Socrates, namely the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phædo*, will not feel that they have changed their atmosphere at all, as far as religious belief and hope goes; they are indeed beholding religious belief exemplified in a real man, and not in the shadowy personages of ancient legend; but the kind of belief is the same. The religion in its details is mistaken, and Socrates at any rate knew that it was mistaken; but the spirit of the belief is one of trust in the Gods, and trust that the Gods are ruling human affairs in such wise that a happy and harmonious end will be realised.

Now the philosophers of Greece who precede Socrates are by no means centred in this sort of attitude. Heraclitus indeed is imbued with the conviction that the Divine nature is intrinsically rational; and Xenophanes protests against the anthropomorphic conceptions of the Deity prevalent among his contemporaries. In the refined abstractions of Parmenides we discern a conviction of the unity of the world, and that in this unity goodness consists. But all these modes of thinking, though connected with religion, are not the heart of religion; the feeling of trust is not dominant. Still less is it dominant in Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Empedocles, Democritus, or Anaxagoras. On the whole, these writers are physicists; though in their physical speculations the proportion of observation to theory is much smaller than in the physicists of the present day. They have a regard for religion, and for religion in a sense different from the popular mythology, but religion is not their central thought. Of Pythagoras I spoke above; a great genius he seems to have been; but his exact attitude towards religion has not been clearly told us.

Every reader of Æschylus and Sophocles, and it may be added of Pindar also, will be sensible that religion stood for a much greater force, a much more overpowering topic of thought, to those poets than it did to the philosophers of the sixth century or the early fifth century before Christ. But with the splendour of Athens under Pericles there arose a light and sceptical vein of thought, pervading the Athenian mind (not without examples in other parts of Greece also). Euripides, the third great dramatist of Athens, has drawn in the breath of scepticism; he has the

air of one who would be religious if he could; but he sees with too perspicacious an eye the moral faults of the mythology, and he knows not how to transcend this impediment. Nor is the great comic poet Aristophanes, with all his love for ancient manners, really a religious mind; his greatest quality, apart from his brilliant imagination, is his love of peace, and of Hellas as Hellas. Among the succeeding poets of Greece there is only one who is markedly religious, and that is Cleanthes, who was primarily a philosopher; his noble hymn to Zeus exhibits the basis of religious feeling in a very pure and simple form.

But I return to Socrates. That he was firm as a rock, tender as a child, is admitted by all; the question is, whether he was also profound in intellect. No one probably would have denied that he was so, if his faithful and attached follower Xenophon had not written about him. As it is, we have two witnesses respecting Socrates, Xenophon and Plato. If Plato alone had written about him, there would certainly have been a doubt as to how far Plato had mingled his own opinions with the opinions of Socrates; but it would have been impossible to deny that Socrates was a subtle and deep inquirer; so intense is the search for truth which Plato everywhere attributes to him. But Xenophon represents Socrates not so much as in search of truth, as having found truth; and the substitution, though it does not injure Socrates as a man, does injure him as a thinker; for the kind of truth which Xenophon loves to attribute to Socrates is truth of a practical sort, roughly but not clearly held; whereas Plato in his delineation of Socrates attributes to him also the desire (and a very intense desire) to see truth clearly. Now the tendency among modern writers has been either to reject or to mistake this testimony of Plato about Socrates. Those persons have rejected it who regard Socrates simply as a plain honest man and nothing more; and who think that all the discourses which Plato attributes to him are simply instances of Plato's wonderful power of imagination. Those persons mistake Plato's testimony who think that Socrates was simply a reasoner for reasoning's sake, and that that exalted region of positive conceptions in which Plato takes delight did not belong to Socrates at all.

Let me try to show the real state of the case. I am not ignoring the value of Xenophon's account of Socrates; he gives us the practical side of Socrates much more than Plato does. It is he who tells us how Socrates remonstrated with his son Lamprocles for bitterly resenting the harsh words of his mother



Xanthippe; and we gather from Xenophon that Xanthippe's bark was worse than her bite, and that she was really an affectionate and careful mother; of which fact Socrates duly reminds his son. It is Xenophon who tells us how Socrates tried to reconcile, and it would seem did reconcile, the two brothers Chærephon and Chærecrates; how he led Aristarchus to supply with useful work the female relatives who had rather forced themselves on his hospitality and protection; how he dissuaded Glaucon from attempting a political career until he had provided himself with the necessary knowledge as to the revenues and forces of Athens. It is Xenophon who tells us that the cause of the change of Critias from friendship to enmity towards Socrates was that Socrates had found fault with him as showing signs of an impure passion; and how Socrates more gently remonstrated with Critobulus when in some danger of a similar kind. It is Xenophon who describes to us the interest which Socrates took in the household of Ischomachus, and how the wife of Ischomachus was tenderly trained by her husband in household duties; a graceful picture, probably amplified by Xenophon's imagination, but still having a basis of truth. The conduct of Socrates as regards the duties of ordinary life is much more to the front in Xenophon than it is in Plato, and a very important part of the life of Socrates it is which Xenophon thus gives us.

But Xenophon was very far from being a speculative philosopher himself, and though a man of very varied ability, subtlety of argument was foreign to him; it is not that he is unintellectual, but the feeling of intense intellectual search could hardly exist in a man who was also a skilful military leader, and a historian and popular writer of no slight merit. Moreover, besides being unable, Xenophon was doubtless also unwilling to exhibit Socrates as a very subtle arguer; it is the evident object of the *Memorabilia* to convince ordinary men, and in particular ordinary Athenians, that Socrates was a man of the highest moral excellence, and that to condemn him to death had been a piece of great wrong-doing on the part of the Athenians; plain and not abstruse arguments were needed in maintaining such a thesis. But when Xenophon gives a description of the general conversation of Socrates, there is great room in it for deep and subtle thought. Here is his list of the Socratic topics.

What is piety? what is impiety? what is the beautiful? what the ugly? what the noble? what the base? what are meant by just and unjust? what by sobriety and madness? what by courage and cowardice?

what is a state? what is a statesman? what is a ruler over men? what is a ruling character<sup>1</sup>?

It is remarkable that this list of Socratic subjects accords better with the conversations of Socrates as recorded by Plato, than with the conversations of Socrates as recorded by Xenophon himself. Not that I am disputing Xenophon's testimony; but it is no doubt most exact where he keeps himself most remote from subtleties of argument. It is precisely here that Plato is strongest, but at the same time most disposed to amplify the argument on his own account; yet I think I can show that even here he is trustworthy in a fair degree.

It will tend to set the mutual relations of Xenophon and Plato, as biographers of Socrates, in a clear light, and will besides be highly pertinent to the subject of the present treatise, if I quote from Xenophon and Plato the passages in which they respectively report the sayings of Socrates on the reason we have for believing in a Divine Power, and some of the bearings of such belief. To take Xenophon first; here is part of the dialogue between Socrates and Aristodemus from the *Memorabilia*<sup>2</sup>:

I will first state [says Xenophon] what I once heard fall from his lips in a discussion with Aristodemus "the little," as he was called, on the topic of divinity. Socrates had observed that Aristodemus neither sacrificed nor gave heed to divination, but on the contrary was disposed to ridicule those who did.

Tell me, Aristodemus (he began), are there any human beings who have won your admiration for their wisdom?

Ar. There are.

Soc. Would you mention to us their names?

Ar. In the writing of epic poetry I have the greatest admiration for Homer, and as a dithyrambic poet for Melanippus. I admire also Sophocles as a tragedian, Polycleitus as a sculptor, and Zeuxis as a painter.

Soc. Which should you consider the more worthy of admiration, a fashioner of senseless images devoid of motion or one who could fashion living creatures endowed with understanding and activity?

Ar. Decidedly the latter, provided his living creatures owed their birth to design and were not the offspring of some chance.

Soc. But now if you had two sorts of things, the one of which presents no clue as to what it is for, and the other is obviously for some useful purpose—which should you judge to be the result of chance, which of design?

Ar. Clearly that which is produced for some useful end is the work of design.

Soc. Does it not strike you then that he who made man from the beginning did for some useful end furnish him with his several senses—

<sup>1</sup> Dakyns' *Xenophon*, vol. III. part I. p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 25 *seq.*



giving him eyes to behold the visible world, and ears to catch the intonations of sound? Or again, what good would there be in odours if nostrils had not been bestowed upon us? what perception of sweet things and pungent, and of all the pleasures of the palate, had not a tongue been fashioned in us as an interpreter of the same? And besides all this, do you not think this looks like a matter of foresight, this closing of the delicate orbs of sight with eyelids as with folding doors, which, when there is need to use them for any purpose, can be thrown wide open and firmly closed again in sleep? and, that even the winds of heaven may not visit them too roughly, this planting of the eyelashes like a protecting screen? this coping of the region above the eyes with cornice-work of eyebrow so that no drop of sweat fall from the head and injure them? again this readiness of the ear to catch all sounds and yet not be surcharged?... I ask you, when you see all these things constructed with such show of foresight, can you doubt whether they are products of chance or intelligence?

*Ar.* No doubt these do look like the contrivances of some one deliberately planning the existence of living creatures.

*Soc.* Well, and doubtless you feel to have a spark of wisdom yourself?

*Ar.* Put your questions, and I will answer.

*Soc.* And yet you imagine that elsewhere no spark of wisdom is to be found? And that, too, when you know that you have in your body a tiny fragment only of the mighty earth, a little drop of the great waters, and of the other elements, vast in their extent, you got, I presume, a particle of each towards the compacting of your bodily frame? Mind alone, it would seem, which is nowhere to be found, you had the lucky chance to snap up and make off with, you cannot tell how. And these things around and about us, enormous in size, infinite in number, owe their orderly arrangement, I suppose, to some vacuity of wit?

*Ar.* It may be, for my eyes fail to see the master agents of these, as one sees the fabricators of things produced on earth.

*Soc.* No more do you see your own soul, which is the master agent of your body; so that, as far as that goes, you may maintain, if you like, that you do nothing with intelligence, but everything by chance.

At this point Aristodemus: I assure you, Socrates, that I do not disdain the Divine power. On the contrary, my belief is that the Divinity is too grand to need any service which I could render.

*Soc.* But the grander that power is, which deigns to tend and wait upon you, the more you are called upon to honour it.... Ah, my good sir, lay to heart and understand that even as your own mind within you can turn and dispose of your body as it lists, so ought we to think that the wisdom which abides within the universal frame does so dispose of all things as it finds agreeable to itself: for hardly may it be that your eye is able to range over many a league, but that the eye of God is powerless to embrace all things at a glance; or that to your soul it is given to dwell in thought on matters here or far away in Egypt or in Sicily, but that the wisdom or thought of God is not sufficient to include all things at one instant under His care. If only you would copy your own behaviour where human beings are concerned. It is by acts of service and of kindness that you discover which of your fellows are willing to requite you in kind. It is by taking another into your counsel that you arrive at the secret of his wisdom. If, on like principle, you will but make trial of the Gods by acts of service, whether they will choose to give you counsel in matters

obscure to mortal vision, you shall discover the nature and the greatness of Godhead to be such that they are able at once to see all things and to hear all things and to be present everywhere, nor does the least thing escape their watchful care.

I trust the reader does not think my quotation too long (I have been obliged to curtail the passage). For its mixture of theory and practical advice, it seems to me one of the most remarkable passages in all ancient literature; and the comment which Xenophon appends to the dialogue which he has recorded is one which may well be echoed by his readers now and always :

To my mind the effect of words like these was to cause those about him to hold aloof from unholiness, baseness, and injustice, not only whilst they were seen of men, but even in the solitary place, since they must believe that no part of their conduct could escape the eye of Heaven.

Nevertheless it is obvious that such a mixture of argument and exhortation leaves many questions unanswered both on the theoretical and on the practical side. The position taken up is just and right as a beginning; the Greek mythology is entirely absent from it; and as regards one detail, namely that Socrates speaks of "the Gods" in the plural number, it may be observed that the same plural form occurs in the first verse of the Hebrew Bible, and in neither case is it in the least intended to impair the unity of the divine purpose. But it is one thing to say that a position is a right one to start from, and another thing that we ought to be satisfied with it. If the meaning of Socrates, in his argument with Aristodemus, was that the position laid down by him was one that we might acquiesce in without further inquiry—if he was oblivious or imperceptive of the fact that it does need support in the details of scientific experience and of practical life—then we should certainly be obliged to say that his range of thought was a limited one. Are we obliged to say this?

We must not expect that Xenophon, admirable though he is in his own line, will supply us with sayings of Socrates that go beyond the intellectual scope of the passage I have just quoted. But let us see what Plato tells us. In the *Phædo*, Socrates is represented as giving an account of his early thoughts on philosophy; of his attraction to the philosophy of Anaxagoras from what he heard of it in general, his disappointment with that philosophy when he examined it in detail. Here is the passage (Jowett's *Plato*, vol. i. pp. 446 *sqq*) :

Then I heard some one who had a book of Anaxagoras, as he said, out of which he read that mind was the disposer and cause of all, and I was quite delighted at the notion of this, which appeared admirable, and I said



to myself, If mind is the disposer, mind will dispose all for the best, and put each particular in the best place; and I argued that if any one desired to find out the cause of the generation or destruction or existence of anything, he must find out what state of being or suffering or doing was best for that thing, and therefore a man had only to consider the best for himself and others, and then he would also know the worse, for that the same science comprised both. And I rejoiced to think that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher of the causes of existence such as I desired, and I imagined that he would tell me first whether the earth is flat or round; and then he would further explain the cause and the necessity of this, and would teach me the nature of the best and show that this was best; and if he said that the earth was in the centre, he would explain that this position was the best, and I should be satisfied if this were shown to me, and not want any other sort of cause. And I thought that I would then go on and ask him about the sun and moon and stars, and that he would explain to me their comparative swiftness, and their returnings and various states, and how their several affections, active and passive, were all for the best. For I could not imagine that when he spoke of mind as the disposer of them, he would give any other account of their being as they are, except that this was the best; and I thought that when he had explained to me in detail the cause of each and the cause of all, he would go on to explain to me what was best for each and what was best for all. I had hopes which I would not have sold for much, and I seized the books and read them as fast as I could in my eagerness to know the better and the worse.

What hopes I had formed, and how grievously was I disappointed! As I proceeded, I found my philosopher altogether forsaking mind or any other principle of order, but having recourse to air, and ether, and water, and other eccentricities. I might compare him to a person who began by maintaining generally that mind is the cause of the actions of Socrates, but who, when he endeavoured to explain the causes of my several actions in detail, went on to show that I sit here because my body is made up of bones and muscles; and the bones, as he would say, are hard and have ligaments which divide them, and the muscles are elastic, and they cover the bones, which have also a covering or environment of flesh and skin which contains them; and as the bones are lifted at their joints by the contraction or relaxation of the muscles, I am able to bend my limbs, and this is why I am sitting here in a curved posture;—that is what he would say, and he would have a similar explanation of my talking to you, which he would attribute to sound, and air, and hearing, and he would assign ten thousand other causes of the same sort, forgetting to mention the true cause, which is, that the Athenians have thought fit to condemn me, and accordingly I have thought it better and more right to remain here and undergo my sentence; for I am inclined to think that these muscles and bones of mine would have gone off to Megara or Bœotia—by the dog of Egypt they would, if they had been guided only by their own idea of what was best, and if I had not chosen as the better and nobler part, instead of playing truant and running away, to undergo any punishment which the state inflicts. There is surely a strange confusion of causes and conditions in all this. It may be said, indeed, that without bones and muscles and the other parts of my body, I cannot execute my purposes. But to say that I do as I do because of them, and that this is the way in which mind acts, and not

from the choice of the best, is a very careless and idle mode of speaking. I wonder that they cannot distinguish the cause from the condition, which the many, feeling about in the dark, are always mistaking and misnaming. And thus one man makes a vortex all round and steadies the earth by the heaven; another gives the air as a support to the earth, which is a sort of broad trough. Any power which in disposing them as they are disposes them for the best never enters into their minds, nor do they imagine that there is any superhuman strength in that; they rather expect to find another Atlas of the world who is stronger and more everlasting and more containing than the good is, and are clearly of opinion that the obligatory and containing power of the good is as nothing; and yet this is the principle which I would fain learn if any one would teach me.

There is no direct mention of the Divine Power in this passage; but it is quite evident that it is the Divine Power of which Socrates is speaking, and that the "mind" of which he is in search is the Supreme Mind. What, however, I am most concerned here to remark is this: the passage from Plato is on the same lines as the passage from Xenophon, but is an extension of it into a region where the phenomena do not so clearly indicate the conclusion which Socrates has at heart, namely the goodness of the Divine Mind. In Xenophon, Socrates tells Aristodemus that the Divine Power has been his benefactor by giving him those senses which are percipient of the external world; in Plato, Socrates tells his hearers how keen his desire had always been to discern that goodness was inherent in the structure of the universe at large, where there are many phenomena discernible as facts, but not readily seen to be examples of beneficence. The moral character of the passage from Xenophon, and of the passage from Plato, is the same; only in Xenophon, Socrates speaks as one declaring certainties, in Plato he speaks as one in search; the difference being produced by the difference in the phenomena which are the subject of the inquiry. When we consider that according to the testimony of both Xenophon and Plato, Socrates was a person preeminently searching after true moral principles, the probability that the passage in Plato is an authentic account of what Socrates really said must be admitted to be great; nor are there wanting other reasons to confirm this inference. Though Xenophon does not record the disappointment which Socrates felt on reading Anaxagoras, in the way in which it is recorded in the *Phædo*, he does record the disapproval of Anaxagoras felt by Socrates, especially in regard to the view of Anaxagoras that the sun was no more than a "fiery stone<sup>1</sup>"; and the disapproval on this ground is repeated also in the *Apology* of Socrates as given

<sup>1</sup> *Memorabilia*, iv. 7.



by Plato. The three passages are confirmatory of one another. Xenophon adds, that Socrates remarked on the vivifying effect of the sun's rays on plants as distinguishing it from ordinary fire; an observation which in its main purport is also attributed to Socrates in Plato's Republic<sup>1</sup>. An additional reason for holding the passage in the Phædo to be an authentic utterance of Socrates lies in the expression of doubt which the passage contains as to whether the earth is flat or round. When Socrates was a young man, let us say between the years 450 and 440 B.C., the rotundity of the earth, though growing continually more probable, was not an absolutely established doctrine; there was a possibility of doubt being expressed on the matter. But it is very unlikely that Plato in his mature years ever had a doubt on the point; in the fanciful description of the earth towards the end of the Phædo, for instance (which I agree with ordinary critics in assigning to Plato as distinguished from Socrates), it is assumed that the earth is spherical. Where then a doubt is expressed on the point, we have reason to say that the doubt was one entertained by Socrates in his youth, rather than by Plato in his manhood; and this circumstance tells in favour of the authenticity of the whole account.

But over and above these special reasons, let the reader of the passage just quoted from the Phædo say whether it does not sound like a genuine piece of autobiography? Plato had a sufficient personal intimacy with Socrates to be in a position to know something of the early history of his great teacher; and though Plato was prevented by illness from being a witness of the last scene of the life of Socrates, yet if Socrates did on that occasion relate this old experience of his, as the Phædo tells us that he did, no one would be better able than Plato to appreciate it and reproduce it from the evidence of another (though it is also likely that Plato had himself heard Socrates on some other occasion tell this experience). Without in the least denying that Plato did put into the mouth of Socrates opinions and poetic descriptions which did not belong to the true Socrates, I cannot think that so specific a piece of autobiography as that which describes the relations of Socrates to Anaxagoras is one which Plato would have invented; even if there had not been so many incidental reasons, which I have given above, for thinking the passage authentic.

But if the passage is an authentic account of himself given

<sup>1</sup> VI. 509 B.

by the true Socrates, observe what follows. All that kind of representation of Socrates, which makes him out to be a mere pious, good man with an extraordinary delight in convicting other people of ignorance, falls to the ground. The question which Socrates brings forward in the passage from the *Phædo* is the profoundest of all questions which to this day have ever come before the mind of man. It is the question, whether the world has been created and organised for good ends. That question is, it is true, not a question which has been at all the most prominent in modern physical science, which rests on external observation. Nor is it a question formally propounded in the Bible; though the temper inculcated in the Bible is a temper which looks upon all things as created for good ends. This also was the temper of Socrates; but the faith in a supreme goodness ruling the universe is not one that can relieve us from the desire of seeing in actual experience that all things are working towards good issues, and towards an increasing happiness and well being of all living things. The inquiry suggested is infinite in its extent, and yet perfectly clear in its character; and the person who first propounded it deserves our reverence in no ordinary degree. That person, if the reasonings given above are valid, was Socrates. He first set before men the endeavour, expressed long afterwards in famous words by Milton,

To justify the ways of God to man.

It is desirable that I should follow up this assertion with some further arguments directed to show that Plato, with all his imaginative and dramatic power, was yet in many respects a trustworthy witness respecting the sayings and doings of Socrates; though I admit that he is not so in every respect, and in regard to the most elaborate of all the dialogues into which Socrates enters, the *Republic*, it is particularly hard to draw the line between real memory and imaginative expansion. But of that I must speak later; on the more general question I argue as follows.

In the first place Plato gives, what Xenophon nowhere gives, an intelligible account of the causes which made Socrates unpopular at Athens, and which, when circumstances at last brought them to a head, led the Athenians to condemn him to death. That long and energetic practice of his, the subjecting his fellow-citizens to a kind of continuous catechising, whereby all their ignorances were brought to light and their self-esteem hurt, could not but produce a sentiment against him. The picturesque



description of his conduct in this respect, given in his apology as recorded by Plato, has no parallel in any other account given of him; the simile, which he there applies to himself, as a "gadfly" sent by divine command to stir up the Athenian people (whom he compares to a large and noble but somewhat sluggish horse) to greater energy, is transparently authentic. The gadfly, we may be sure, would not be liked by the horse; and so mean a comparison, while it would never have been applied to Socrates by an ardently devoted follower, is just what Socrates, with his keen sense of humour, would have applied to himself. Nor can we fail to recognise in that ironical courtesy towards opponents, of which Plato gives so many examples in Socrates, a weapon that would not always be felt to be conciliatory. The descriptive pen of Xenophon is not equal to representing this irony effectively; but he recognises the fact of it in the words which he represents Hippias as saying to Socrates:

We have had enough of your ridiculing all the rest of the world, questioning and cross-examining first one and then the other, but never a bit will you render an account to any one yourself or state a plain opinion upon a single topic. *Memorabilia*, iv. chapter 4, Dakyns' *Xenophon*, vol. III. part I. p. 155.

Aristotle also was aware of the irony of Socrates (*Ethics*, iv. 13), though it is needless to say that Aristotle does not, any more than Xenophon, give examples of this irony. It is Plato who lets us see it in action. Further, Plato gives us a very important indication of the way in which Socrates had offended the religious susceptibilities of the Athenians, by his censure of large parts of the mythology (as is recorded in the second and third books of the Republic); particularly when we add to this his affirmation of his own inspiration by a Divine Power. Putting these two things together, we see exactly why Meletus accused Socrates of "refusing to recognise the gods acknowledged by the State, and importing strange divinities of his own"; though both Xenophon and Plato tell us that Socrates sacrificed, as ordinary Athenians did, to recognised deities; it was only the unseemly stories respecting the Gods which he refused to accept.

If then Plato far more than any other writer makes us understand why the Athenians put Socrates to death, is not this a ground for giving some credit to his testimony as to the sayings and doings of Socrates? Plato may have been partly a poet, but he was also partly a true historian. Let me add another indication to the same effect.

Of all philosophers, Plato is the most brilliant ; not merely is he eloquent, but there is a sparkle in his dialogue with which mere eloquence is not usually combined. Yet, if any one looks carefully into the occasions when this brilliance, this sparkle, is manifested, he will find it to be dependent on the presence of Socrates among the company. Let Socrates depart, and the sparkle goes too ; and though the converse statement, "Let Socrates arrive, and the sparkle appears," is not universally true, it is true in the most famous and important dialogues. When he is present, we have philosophy *plus* that living thrill which is the charm of human society ; when he is absent, we have philosophy alone. Now would this difference appear, if Plato were simply a poet and Socrates one of his characters ? I think not ; we should then have the sparkle diffused over all Plato's works. But if Plato be truly the biographer, the phenomenon is explained ; the sparkle means that he has genuine delight in a past reminiscence ; the thought of Socrates kindles him, because he really remembers what Socrates was. Can we, recognising this, refuse to admit a genuine basis of truth in what Plato tells us about the opinions of Socrates ?

But further ; as I have quoted and compared together two passages, from Xenophon and Plato respectively, in which the opinions of Socrates on the Divine Providence are set forth, so let me quote and compare two passages from these respective authorities in which the theme of love is treated of in relation to Socrates ; Xenophon giving the practice, Plato the theory, of Socrates. Here first is Xenophon, from the beginning of the fourth book of the *Memorabilia* :

Nor was he less helpful to his acquaintance in his lighter than in his graver moods. Let us take as an example that saying of his, so often on his lips, "I am in love with so-and-so" ; and all the while it was obvious the going forth of his soul was not towards excellence of body in the bloom of beauty, but rather towards faculties of the soul unfolding in virtue. And these "good natures" he detected by certain tokens ; a readiness to learn that to which the attention was directed : a power of retaining in the memory the lessons learnt ; and a passionate predilection for those studies in particular which serve to good administration of a house or of a state, and in general to the proper handling of man and human affairs. Such beings, he maintained, needed only to be educated to become not only happy themselves and happy administrators of their private households, but to be capable of rendering other human beings as states or individuals happy also<sup>1</sup>.

And here is the passage from Plato ; it is from the *Symposium*, and is from the discourse of Socrates, who professes to have heard

<sup>1</sup> Dakyns' *Xenophon*, vol. III. part I. p. 130.



the teaching from Diotima, a wise woman of Mantinea; but whether this be so or not the main gist of it, which is the commendation of the love of beautiful souls, has been justly made his own by Socrates.

He who would proceed rightly in this matter (he says) should begin in youth to turn to beautiful forms; and first, if his instructor guide him rightly, he should learn to love one such form only—out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will himself perceive that the beauty of one form is truly related to the beauty of another; and then, if beauty in general is his pursuit, how foolish he would be not to recognise that the beauty in every form is one and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms; this will lead him on to consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. So that if a virtuous soul have but a little comeliness, he will be content to love and tend him, and will search out and bring to the birth thoughts which may improve the young, until his beloved is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and understand that all is of one kindred, and that personal beauty is only a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will lead him on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, himself a slave mean and calculating, but looking at the abundance of beauty and drawing towards the sea of beauty, and creating and beholding many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until at length he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere.... Do you not see that in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be able to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities; for he has hold not of an image but of a reality; and bringing forth and educating true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may? Would that be an ignoble life<sup>1</sup>?

In that passage of Plato, the primary thought is the same as in the passage of Xenophon; and in both passages, it is the mind and practice of Socrates which is being set before us; in Plato, more especially the mind; in Xenophon, more especially the practice. It is true that Plato infuses into the subject a poetic imagery which is foreign to Xenophon; and also he brings into clear view the divine immortal part of man's nature, which Xenophon is here content to leave in the background. But from both we perceive that deep in the nature of Socrates a power of love was seated, which was, as it could not help being, most attractive to ardent ingenuous souls, especially those of the young; a power of love which was closely united with the desire for clear intellectual insight. If we ask how this power of love as shown

<sup>1</sup> Jowett's *Plato*, vol. I. pp. 526-7.

in Socrates differs from that which we find commended and exemplified in the pages of the New Testament, I think we must say that love as exhibited by Jesus Christ and his chief apostles receives wings from the profound pity which commingles with it; there is a sense of the urgent need of it, without which it could not have been effective for redeeming the whole human race. To this Socrates does not reach; but we must not undervalue his commingling of love with the intellectual element, with his sense of the good of true understanding: Christianity in all its early history was so much an appeal to the poor and unlearned, that the intellectual element is subordinate in it.

It will not be out of place, in regard to the part of the character of Socrates with which I am now dealing, to refer to a dialogue found among those of Plato, but by modern critics not generally held genuine, the *Theages*; genuine or not, it has a sentence which is worth our remembering. I mean that in which Socrates tells Theages that he resigns "blessed and honourable sciences" to men like Prodicus and Gorgias, and only claims for himself one small piece of knowledge, the Art of Love. No one who studies either Plato or Xenophon will doubt that Socrates was justified in this claim.

Speaking generally, one would say that Xenophon gives us a greater proportion of historic accuracy as regards Socrates than Plato does. But the difference is not so great as is generally supposed; and in one important work, the *Apology*, Plato is more exact than Xenophon. It is not wonderful that it should be so, for Plato was present at the trial of Socrates<sup>1</sup>, whereas Xenophon at the time was in Asia, having just returned from the Cyreian expedition; his knowledge on this point was second hand. In most matters respecting the trial, however, our two authorities are remarkably coincident. In both, a considerable space is taken up with a personal colloquy between Socrates and his accuser Meletus (the other two accusers, Anytus and Lycon, do not enter in); in both, Socrates relates the question which Chærephon put to the Delphic oracle, and the answer given by the oracle; in both, Socrates refers to the "divine sign" which was wont to restrain him from wrong courses; in both, he is careless about conciliating his judges, and addresses to them home truths, to which his hearers do not always listen with placidity; in both, he declares that death to him is not a calamity. In both, when he has been declared guilty, and is asked to name a penalty as an alternative to that penalty of death which Meletus proposed,

<sup>1</sup> See Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, pp. 34 A, 38 B.



he refuses to name any penalty; though it is true that in Plato's account he relaxes in the end owing to the entreaties of his friends, and proposes for himself a fine of thirty minæ, his friends having offered to pay this for him. In both accounts, he addresses the audience after he has been condemned to death, and says he has been unjustly condemned, and refers to the case of the hero Palamedes as in like manner unjustly condemned in the olden time.

Nor is there less correspondence between Plato and Xenophon as respects the surroundings of the trial, than in the trial itself. In both, the fact is mentioned that the death was delayed for many days (a month, in fact) in consequence of the annual embassy to Delos coinciding with his condemnation; for until the embassy returned from its voyage, it was the custom of the Athenians to refrain from putting any one to death. In both, the wish of the friends of Socrates that he should escape out of prison, and his refusal to do so, are mentioned. It is worth notice again, that of seven persons whom Xenophon specially names as true and honourable friends of Socrates, five (namely Crito, Hermogenes, Simmias, Cebes, Phædonides) are mentioned by Plato as present at the death of Socrates; the sixth, Chærekrates, is mentioned by Plato (under the title of the brother of Chærephon) as present at the trial; while the seventh, Chærephon himself, had died shortly before the trial. With respect to another follower of Socrates, Apollodorus, it is remarkable how similar his character is as described by Plato and by Xenophon. According to Plato, Apollodorus was the first and most vehement of the friends of Socrates in lamentation, when Socrates had drunk the poison handed him by the gaoler; while Xenophon records this anecdote about him:

Now there was present a certain Apollodorus, who was an enthusiastic lover of the master, but for the rest a simple-minded man. He exclaimed very innocently, "But the hardest thing of all to bear, Socrates, is to see you put to death unjustly."—Whereupon Socrates, it is said, gently stroked the young man's head; "Would you have been better pleased, my dear one, to see me put to death for some just reason rather than unjustly?" and as he spoke he smiled tenderly<sup>1</sup>.

The action of Socrates in stroking the head of Apollodorus is paralleled by a similar action of his towards Phædo, recorded by Plato (*Phædo*, p. 89 B).

In the midst of this great and various agreement between

<sup>1</sup> Dakyn's *Xenophon*, vol. III. part I. pp. 193-4.

Xenophon and Plato as respects the trial and death of Socrates, there are two points in which our authorities differ; and in both, as I have said, the preference must be given to Plato. Xenophon makes Socrates in his defence appeal directly to his practice of sacrificing on the public altars. We have reason to say that Socrates did this as a fact, but Plato does not make him defend himself by mentioning it, and the tone of his defence in Plato is not altogether consistent with his having mentioned it. It is evident, I think, that Socrates felt instinctively a certain difference between the temper of his own religious worship and that of ordinary Athenians; which difference Xenophon hardly appreciated, and still less would have wished to mention. The other point in which Plato and Xenophon are inconsistent with each other is one of greater importance. The reader will remember that I quoted the two forms in which the saying of the Delphic oracle respecting Socrates is given; Plato putting it thus, that "no one was wiser than Socrates"; Xenophon more expansively thus, "that there was no human being more liberal, or more upright, or more temperate than Socrates." Now even as a matter of mere form, the brevity of Plato is more akin to the character of the oracle than the effusiveness of Xenophon; but the difference reaches much beyond mere form. According to Xenophon, the oracle is simply accepted by Socrates, and there is an end of it; but according to Plato, the oracular response is interpretative of the whole public career of Socrates, and for this very reason, that Socrates did not lightly or easily accept it. He wondered at the oracle having said that no man was wiser than he; till at last he hit upon the explanation, that all men were ignorant of the things which most concerned them, and he no less than others; but that he had just this little advantage over others, that he knew himself to be ignorant, whereas others thought themselves wise. I know not whether the exquisite grace with which Socrates expounds this thesis, and relates how he made himself unpopular by vindicating the correctness of the oracle as to the ignorance under which all men were labouring, be a true fact; Plato was an exquisite artist, and something may have been added by him to Socrates as regards beauty of style; but surely is it in substance the true Socrates we are hearing, when we read this explanation of his remarkable career. It does explain Socrates to us; and nothing else does adequately explain him. Surely this tells in favour of Plato as a truthful biographer.

I venture to say, moreover, that the single really untenable



argument which Socrates (according to Plato) advanced in his own defence—the argument that he could not wilfully have taught men to do injury to others, because then he would be teaching them to do injury to himself—has a real Socratic ring about it: Socrates did not strengthen his case by using it, but it fell in with the customary tenor of his thoughts, and we must believe that he did say this.

If then the *Apology* of Socrates as given by Plato is substantially a true and adequate account of what Socrates said in his own defence at his trial, must we not hold that the dialogue which immediately follows the *Apology*, the *Crito*, is authentic also; in which the noble argument is given, by virtue of which Socrates rejected the suggestion made to him, that he should escape from prison, and so save his life? (We must remember that it is not only Plato, but Xenophon, who tells us that he rejected this suggestion.) The argument is essentially this, that a man should in all lawful things obey cheerfully the commands of his country, even though those commands lead him to his death.

And now I come to that Platonic dialogue which follows in due sequence after the *Apology* and the *Crito*—namely, the *Phædo*—in which the account of the death of Socrates is given. Of that scene Plato was not himself a witness; his own illness was the cause which kept him away; but it is plain that he had the greatest possible interest in knowing what happened, and there were many who were able to inform him. Are we to disbelieve him when he says that Socrates spent the last day of his life in discussing with his friends the question of the soul's immortality? I know not on what ground we should disbelieve it. The occasion was so solemn as to constitute a demand on Plato that he should say nothing but what was effectively true; he might and would put the truth in his own language, no doubt, but truth ought to be there, and I do not doubt that there is truth in what Plato records in the *Phædo*. Moreover, I have already spent much pains in vindicating the truth of a particular part of the *Phædo*, that namely in which Socrates is represented as expressing his keen desire to perceive the divine goodness in the facts of the phenomenal universe as known to us. If in this part of the dialogue Plato is narrating true facts, it lends probability to the truthfulness of the rest. Let me then give as briefly as possible the arguments for the immortality of the soul as stated in the *Phædo*; they are in the main three; and the first of the three is one eminently natural for Socrates, in the position in which he then was, to have put

forward. It is an argument resting on the feeling that the life of a true philosopher must always be a preparation for death, or in other words a preparation for the time when the soul shall be separated from the body. The soul is regarded as superior to the body, and as having in this life the duty of governing the body ; and the thought is, that if the soul discharges its duty of governing the body well, it becomes fitted for higher station afterwards. This argument is begun in the ninth chapter of the dialogue, and then, without being continuously dwelt upon, it is evidently in the thoughts of the speaker, and finds its natural termination in the 32nd, 33rd, and 34th chapters. The feeling that bodily pleasures are unworthy is in some parts of the argument too preponderant ; but was that an unnatural feeling in Socrates immediately before his death ? But meanwhile, in the middle of this argument, the second of the three arguments of which I spoke is interjected ; it is in fact suggested by one of the friends of Socrates who is present, Cebes ; but he prefaces it by saying that Socrates is often accustomed to speak of the thesis on which the argument rests. That thesis is, that our knowledge, in its leading principles, is essentially remembrance ; that we had it before we were born into this present life. This implies that we lived in an antecedent life ; and if we lived in an antecedent life, is that not an argument that we shall also live in a future life ?

Now in modern times this argument will not, I think, be received with as much respect as the first argument ; for the duty of educating the soul in virtue cannot be ignored, and the thought that it is being educated for responsibilities that will be realised after death will not be derided, at any rate ; whereas the thought of the soul's preexistence is hardly seriously entertained in modern European thought. Moreover, this second argument is generally thought of as distinctly Platonic, not Socratic. Nevertheless (to take the last point first) I do not believe that Plato would have put into the mouth of Cebes the statement that Socrates "often" referred to the doctrine that the soul remembered principles learnt in a state of previous existence if that doctrine had never been propounded by Socrates. As to the doctrine itself, it is in a very mysterious region, and what I have to say about it had better be postponed until I have stated the third argument for immortality given in the Phædo.

That third argument is elaborated at length in the dialogue, but the upshot of it, which is reached at the close of the 54th chapter, may be put into very brief compass, and it is this. The



question is asked: "What is that, the presence of which implies that the body is alive?" and the answer given is, "It is the soul." "Therefore," the inference is drawn, "the soul is essentially life; death is its opposite; therefore the soul is immortal."

Of all three arguments it may be said (and especially it may be said of the first of the three) that though they do not produce conviction, neither are they to be despised. They remain in our thoughts, though not as proofs of what is, yet as indications of what may be. It is an "honourable risk" to think in this way; this is the phrase by which Socrates (in the 63rd chapter of the *Phædo*) certainly characterises a part of the argument, and I think he means to characterise the whole of it thus. The proof must come later, if at all; but meanwhile, indications of truth are welcome. This is the true Socratic position; it is foreshadowed in the *Apology*; and though in the *Apology* the side of doubt is more distinctly represented than in the *Phædo*, it is only natural that a courageous spirit should devote his last words to the infusion of hope into those who hear him.

Thus, while the form of the arguments for immortality given in the *Phædo* is due to Plato, the underlying thought certainly belongs to Socrates; and the objections (not by any means idle or unreasonable) which Simmias and Cebes raise to the arguments of Socrates may be accepted as historical facts, as well as (substantially) the replies which Socrates makes to them. There is no reason why the Socratic authorship should not be accepted in the case of the argument for preexistence, out of which immortality follows as a sequel, as much as in respect of the other arguments. So mysterious a theme cannot be pursued into details; but in itself the argument is neither unreasonable, nor is the premiss on which it rests—the congenital possession by human beings of faculties in the germ—at all disputable; it is an argument well within the range of Socrates, and should be accepted as his. Socrates may easily have believed, and we may believe too, that our real existence did not begin with our physical conception and birth. But on such a subject we ought not to be too free with our imaginations.

Does Xenophon support Plato in his account of the views of Socrates respecting immortality? Not by his direct evidence; and it is quite possible that he was less acquainted with this side of the mind of Socrates than Plato was. But yet, when we consider the narrative of the death of Cyrus the elder, as given by Xenophon in his *Cyropædia*, we perceive that Cyrus is represented as holding

just that mixture of belief with a shade of doubt respecting a future life which is avowed by Socrates in his *Apology* (as given by Plato); and we do probably see in this the Socratic influence on Xenophon<sup>1</sup>.

I must not dwell on the other Platonic dialogues with anything like that fullness with which I have treated of the *Phædo*; but it will be proper to mention some notable instances in which the true Socrates is discernible in Plato. We may see him in the moral maxims, which are sometimes very profound. Take, for instance, those which we find in the *Gorgias*; that "he who injures another, injures himself more"; that "to suffer wrong is better than to do wrong"; that he who has done wrong ought to seek, and not to avoid, the just punishment, for his own good. Take, again, the fine definition of courage in the *Republic*, as the just sentiment respecting things which ought to be feared and things which ought not to be feared. Most of all, take the saying in the *Crito*, that it is wrong to revenge ourselves upon those who have injured us. It has sometimes been thought that this saying is not authentic, owing to its contrast with the words which Xenophon reports Socrates to have used in his conversation with Critobulus (*Memorabilia*, book II.), that "a man's virtue is to excel his friends in kindness and his foes in hostility"; but it must be remembered that Socrates was more likely to express his truest and deepest feelings during the last days of his life (to which period the *Crito* belongs) than in an accidental expression uttered years before, when he might not unnaturally have spoken in the manner of ordinary Greek feeling. Nor can we say that it was impossible for Xenophon to put an ordinary Greek sentiment into the mouth of Socrates carelessly and by mere accident; whereas the saying in the *Crito* could not possibly have slipped in by accident.

I attribute the above maxims, recorded by Plato as spoken by Socrates, truly to Socrates; and for this reason, that Socrates was before everything a moralist, and original in his moral teaching. Testimony and probability favour an identical conclusion here. It will be of interest to compare his morality, in the most formal statement of it, with an analogous statement in the New Testament. The Socratic division of virtue (to judge by Plato and in the main also by Xenophon) was fourfold: courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom, are the four sustaining pillars of righteous

<sup>1</sup> Jowett is, though rather doubtfully, of this opinion (see the close of his introduction to the *Phædo*); and H. G. Dakyns has noticed the probability that Xenophon had Socrates in his thoughts when writing the story which appears in book III. chap. 1, §§ 38-40, of the *Cyropædia*.



conduct. But the New Testament division of virtue, as set forth by the apostle Paul, is threefold; faith, hope, and love are its constituents. Now the first three of the Socratic virtues, though not the same as the three Pauline virtues, have yet an analogy to them; and in this comparison the Pauline virtues have the superiority. He who has faith, has something which lies at the root of courage, and administers to courage. Temperance and hope are not indeed the same; but what Paul meant by hope, the steady anticipation of future good as ordained for men by God, is the greatest cause of temperance in present enjoyments. Finally, love is the soil on which a just treatment of our fellow-men naturally grows. In these important points, Christian virtue has a depth to which the Socratic philosophy does not attain. But what is to be said of the fourth Socratic virtue, "wisdom" or "insight" (σοφία, φρόνησις)? It cannot be identified with any of the other virtues, either in the Socratic or in the Pauline scale; it expresses purposive action in a way in which the other virtues do not express it. Purpose is one of the cardinal qualities of man; and I cannot but think that "wisdom," in the Socratic sense, has a scope to which early Christian sentiment hardly did justice; it means the slow building up of a happy human society; and the problem, how to effect this, received but imperfect attention in early Christian times. On the other hand, Socrates did no doubt fall into the error of making the study of virtue too much an affair of reasoning (which is the opposite error from that of the early Christians). In his personal conduct, a divine instinct, warning him when he was about to do wrong, continually attended upon him, as he tells us; but he ought to have felt that for others also the way of virtue lay in trusting such an instinct; whereas in his instructions to others, he commended rather the intellectual search after virtue, which by itself is a comparatively crude method, although of course one that has its value, as I have just been saying. But the over-valuation of knowledge was (if I may use an old metaphor) the heel of Achilles in his spiritual framework.

Neither my subject, nor the limits of this work, permit me to enter in detail upon the interesting question how far the real Socratic element exists in those other Platonic dialogues in which Socrates is the chief speaker; but I may say briefly that I believe the first four books of the *Republic* to contain a great deal of the real thought of Socrates; and I incline to think that the early chapters of the *Parmenides*, in which Socrates as a youthful

arguer is represented as yielding to the veteran philosopher (needlessly in my opinion), contain a reminiscence of a true historic fact.

No account of Socrates, however brief, ought to omit to mention the consistent courage which he displayed as a man (apart from his energy as a thinker), both when employed in military service, and still more when resisting unjust commands of oligarchs and outcries of the Athenian populace; and whether we regard him as a philosopher or as a man, we may read sympathetically these words, with which Plato, after narrating his death, characterises him:

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest, and justest, and best, of all the men whom I have ever known.

These, the concluding words of the *Phædo*, might be fully paralleled from *Xenophon* also.

I have dwelt at length on the teaching of Socrates, because though in a certain way he is always recognised as the central point of the Greek spiritual development, it has been too common with critics to regard him as a mere questioner and arguer, a sharpener of the intellect rather than an implanter of moral truth in the minds of men. But his real influence lay in the moral feeling which he inspired, and in the unerring instinct by which he brought moral feeling into alliance with religious devotion; these are qualities which transcend the imaginative brilliancy of Plato, and the large knowledge of Aristotle.

As to the physical philosophers who came before Socrates, they, though not equal to him, must be commended for the interest which they showed in the visible universe; and while men like Thales and Leucippus have come down to us rather as speculative theorists than as scientific observers, it must be remembered that a great deal of exact observation was being carried on in Greece during the fifth century before Christ, which bore fruit in after time. The names of the observers have for the most part been forgotten; but the name of Meton survives. He was the reformer of the calendar at Athens; and the golden number 19, which coordinates the revolutions of the sun and moon, and which has served ecclesiastical purposes in Christian times, was by him discovered. The search after intellectual truth was at all times characteristic of the Hellenic mind; the distinction of Socrates was that, inheriting this characteristic, he applied it to the most important of all subjects, the determination of the conduct of men with a view to the increase of life and happiness.



This most important quest was taken up, after the death of Socrates, by his pupil, Plato, and by the pupil of Plato, Aristotle. To these great names I must do no dishonour, and yet I cannot adequately treat of them here; for Plato to some extent, and Aristotle much more, entered upon themes of general interest, which have only an indirect connexion with the vital springs of human nature, and by consequence with history.

In ethics and religion, Plato took up the Socratic position, systematised it, illustrated it, expanded it. He was a literary artist, which Socrates was not; he was a systematiser, which Socrates was not; he had poetic imaginations which we can hardly attribute to Socrates. Yet the essential character of Plato's philosophy was due to Socrates; the feeling that our deepest interest is due to mankind, that the human soul and character deserve our careful study beyond anything else in the world, and that man has received his faculties and bodily frame from a divine source and is dependent on the divine help for his well-being; all this is the root of the philosophy of Plato, because it had been the root of the philosophy of Socrates. Even the idealism of Plato sprung out of the germ which Socrates had sown; though the creative use which Plato makes of the cardinal spiritual ideas, their function in the mind of God to create this world which we see and feel, goes beyond anything which Socrates conceived in this line, and belongs to Plato alone.

If Plato is sometimes rather tiresome in the minuteness and length of his argumentation, he makes up for this by the splendour of his delineation in the final result. How, for instance, is the reader amazed and electrified by the parable with which the seventh book of the Republic commences; that parable, according to which we of human kind are here on earth as in a dark cavernous prison, seeing only shadows of truths and not the realities themselves, our true life being in the presence of the eternal Good, from which we have been banished, but to which we may hope to reascend! When we look into the meaning of this parable, we perceive that it is just what Socrates in his *Apology* says in plain prose, that all men (and he includes himself in the saying) were ignorant of the things which most concerned them. But Plato has given a new vividness to that saying; he makes us feel the tragic significance of the position of man upon the earth; we tremble as we realise it, and yet are partly relieved by seeing in the distance those divine lights, which are our native possession, if we can only attain to them.

All through the Republic Plato is on the strain to express the whole of life, individual and social; to express it as it should be, if men had attained perfection; to express it as divine, law-abiding and happy. Unlike Socrates, he delights in pressing theories to their conclusions. In so great an effort, carried out with such precision of detail, and with an unequalled audacity of reasoning, there were sure to be errors in the execution; and errors there are, and one of them is a very great error. Three I reckon in all, in this masterpiece; three errors that are more than incidental, and seriously affect our estimate of the whole. The first error is the absolute condemnation of poetry; and we see in the Apology that Socrates was not very favourable to poetry; one must surely see the Socratic influence here. But there is great tenderness mixed with the condemnation; and the error (whether of Plato or of Socrates) was not likely to produce any diminution of the poetic vein in the actual world. Outside the Apology and the Republic, the brief but very charming dialogue of the *Ion* is well worth reading on this question; the rhapsodist (or reciter of poetry) is treated there with gentle satire, but with much respect. The great amount of genuine human experience and human feeling enshrined in poetry is of course its true and legitimate defence.

The second error in the Republic is evidently due to those Pythagorean philosophers by whom Plato was in some respects so much influenced. It is this. After the splendid passage at the beginning of the seventh book, to which I have just been referring, in which the need of mankind to ascend out of their present darkness into the divine light is set forth, the question is asked, What form of knowledge constitutes the first step in our progress towards the heavenly light? and the answer is, Arithmetic. That is surely a fantastic answer; but we have to remember the transcendental aspect in which Pythagoras surveyed the whole subject of number.

But the most extraordinary of all the errors in the Republic is that in the fifth book, intermediate between the two already mentioned. I need hardly say that I am referring to the scheme by which the leading class in the State, the "Guardians," are to have their wives in common, and their children in consequence common also; precaution being taken that no parent, either father or mother, shall know which are his or her individual children; it being added that the inferior or unhealthy children are not to be allowed to live. The whole socialistic scheme, of which the above provision is a part, is beyond the scope of my present argument;



perhaps it may be said briefly that the spirit of it is superior to the form of it. But with respect to the project of a community of wives and children, so entirely does it trample on natural feeling, that we can but echo the condemnation which has been expressed by every writer who has had occasion to mention it, from Aristotle<sup>1</sup> downwards. How shall we pardon Plato for such a travesty of morality? Let us pardon him by remembering first that, if he had never been so audaciously wrong, it is not likely that he would ever have been so brilliantly right as he was sometimes. But still more may we pardon him if we remember that in his last and most elaborate treatise, the *Laws*, his view of marriage differs but little from the Christian view; in its main compass I mean, apart from details; though even in the *Laws* the spiritual side of wedded love is not valued highly enough. But the intrinsic equality of the sexes is maintained by Plato in a manner rare among ancient writers. In connexion with this whole subject of sexual relations it should be said that both Socrates and Plato reprobate the sexual connexion of men with men, not indeed with the severity with which the Bible treats it, but distinctly. (See Plato's *Republic*, III. p. 403 and *Laws*, VIII. p. 841; and compare various passages in the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon.)

The defects of Plato's two most elaborate treatises, the *Republic* and the *Laws* (in which latter treatise Socrates does not appear) are eminently the defects of a theorist. He was a theorist in quite a different sense from that in which either Socrates or Aristotle was so; that is to say, he delighted in filling in his theories, and rounding them off, so that they might appear complete and be felt to be attractive by the reader. This procedure was highly artistic but not scientific. It may at first sight appear as if Plato were more of a physicist than Socrates, for the *Timæus* (in which Socrates though present is not the chief speaker) is an attempt to explain the origin of the physical universe. But the attempt, whatever its value, is so distinctly not on the lines of observation and experience through the senses, that we cannot recognise Plato as in the very least a forerunner of the physical science of modern times.

Whatever the faults of those two dialogues, the *Republic* and the *Laws*, no reader of them can fail to be struck by the moral

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle in the second book of the *Politics* speaks as if the whole scheme of a community of wives and children had emanated from Socrates. This is not at all likely, in the detail which the scheme reaches; though we are not entitled to say that Socrates may not have given a hint which was elaborated by Plato. But Aristotle would seem to have avoided attacking his own master, Plato, with an energy which he did not mind using towards Socrates.

and religious feeling, and by the deep interest in the welfare of society, which those works display. Plato remains to us one of the most ardent, independent, and benevolent of minds; and if I may seem to have taken away somewhat from his absolute originality, I have credited him in compensation with the virtue of loyalty. He was truly loyal to Socrates; he desired to make the world know and honour Socrates; though after the manner of those times, he thought it permissible to give picturesque form to his exposition, to expand hints into theories, and even at times to attribute to Socrates theories which really belonged to the Pythagorean school.

Of the personal career of Plato I have so far said nothing; and in truth we know but little of it. That after the death of Socrates he at first avoided Athens; that he travelled; that possibly (though this is uncertain) he had the misfortune to be sold into slavery, but was redeemed from it by one who admired and esteemed him; these things are recorded, and may be true. Certainly he afterwards lectured at Athens, in the groves of the Academy, and in his old age was esteemed and honoured there. He was, at any rate, not poor; and in relation to this a repartee of his to the cynic Diogenes may commend itself to us. Diogenes with dirty sandals had entered the house of Plato and trod on a new carpet there: "Thus," he said, "I trample on the pride of Plato." "With greater pride, Diogenes," was Plato's answer. One more important thing respecting Plato remains to be added; in the groves of the Academy he had Aristotle for his pupil.

With Aristotle we enter on a new era; and as far as religion is concerned, we are in a certain sense standing at a scene of death. Not that the spirit of religion is dead; but the form of it, as hitherto held among the Greeks, is held to be outside the range of real belief. Though the author of the *Magna Moralia* (printed among Aristotle's works) was very likely not Aristotle himself, he knew the mind of Aristotle, and in his second book he utters this remarkable sentiment; "It would be a strange thing if any one said that he loved Zeus." Certainly we have got very far from Æschylus and Sophocles in that sentiment; from Æschylus, who speaks of Zeus as guiding mortals in the way of wisdom; from Sophocles, in whose play the dispirited Electra is bidden to commit the pain of her anger to the superintending providence of Zeus! But the mythology was in Aristotle's time quite rejected by the philosophers; and Zeus fell with it. Yet to Aristotle, God remains; "a living being, eternal and most excellent"; he tells us in the



*Metaphysics* (xi. 7); and he appears to say that the motions of the universe take place through the passionate desire of all things for this divine being. That is an exalted conception; and exalted too is Aristotle's description of happiness: "an energy of the soul on the lines of perfect virtue, and in a perfect life." Scarcely could these thoughts be excelled; but Aristotle has not the warmth of Socrates or of Plato, and in the region of religion he has not their stimulating power.

What Aristotle is most remarkable for is his extraordinary comprehensiveness, his resolution not to let any side of reality pass by him unnoticed. It could not be expected that, when he came to recording facts, he should not set down much on hearsay; nor could his analyses of thought always be perfect; but he sweeps from end to end of reality with a quiet determination in which no man has ever equalled him.

After Aristotle, the thoughts of the learned in the Greek world became specialised into different branches; but their range on the whole did not diminish, and their value in many ways was great. In the field of science there are illustrious examples; Euclid and Archimedes in mathematics are household words; in astronomy, Aristarchus of Samos anticipated by conjecture, though he could not prove, the theory which Copernicus introduced to the modern world, and which to-day is a commonplace truth; Hipparchus was the greatest, Ptolemy the most famous, astronomical observer of ancient time. Rather later than the latest of these, Galen was eminent in medicine.

Ethical philosophy is nearer to religion than science is; and more than Academics and Peripatetics (as is probable), more than Epicureans (as is certain), the Stoics kept up a noble atmosphere of resolution and of allegiance to duty in the world. But our means of estimating Stoicism would be scanty if Greek philosophers of this school had been the only teachers of it; we know it much more intimately through Roman writers; and Epictetus, though a Greek and writing in Greek, lived under the Roman empire. It will be better therefore to reserve what I have to say about Stoicism till the next chapter, of which Rome, and the religion of Rome, will be the theme.

Let me finish this chapter by endeavouring to indicate briefly what we owe to ancient Hellas. The extraordinary variety of Greek achievements, both by external actions recorded in history, and by works of literature and art, is the characteristic which first strikes us; but the real goodness of some eminent Greeks,

and the intensity of moral and religious feeling in these select persons, is a nobler possession still. Yet the noblest of the Greeks did not establish such a foundation of divine goodness that all mankind might rest in this afterwards, as securely leading us into that infinite unknown, which lies beyond the present life. The greatest absolute achievement of the Hellenic race was the steadying and clarifying of the intellect; to appreciate how much they did for mankind in this way, let any one compare the lucid narrative of Thucydides with any Oriental writing whatever. It is true that their greatest men, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, fell, through lack of knowledge, into some intellectual errors; but the more than two thousand years experience which mankind have had since their time gives us an unfair advantage over them, if the rivalry be regarded as personal.

In conclusion, I hope that the pains which I have taken in this chapter to vindicate for Socrates his true preeminence among the Greeks, will not be regarded as pressed unduly; it is of no slight importance that the master should be recognised as the master.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ANCIENT RELIGION : ROME

IN imperial Rome the ancient times had their end and limit, their euthanasia, their passage through the abysses of death, out of which the heavenly earth was to be born. Not that that new birth lay in ancient Rome, or could have come about there: not to Rome did the seed of eternity belong; but to Rome belonged the office of protecting that seed in its tender infancy. We are accustomed to think of ancient Rome as an aggressive military power, conquering and subduing; and that indeed she was; but that was not her most noble characteristic. Rome did also stretch a canopy and a shelter over the nations; and under that shelter grew whatever of spiritual life our western world possessed; and though when the religion of Christ was born, in which the capacity of eternity lay, Rome would not endure the seeming rivalry of that spiritual government, and made fitful and sometimes severe war upon it, yet the general protection had in it more service than the occasional hostility had danger.

How did this power of ancient Rome come about? in what qualities was its protective influence born? what were its demerits, its corruptions? for its great merits had certainly their counter-balance in the way of evil done. Let me, before beginning to answer these questions, acknowledge the debt I owe to a recent work, Mr Warde Fowler's *Religious Experience of the Roman People*. It is a work in which the foundations of a great subject are largely and accurately laid; nor could I have written the present chapter without its help.

When Livy tells us that it is "sufficiently certain" (*satis constat*) that Æneas with his Trojans came to Italy, and that Æneas became the ancestor of a dynasty from which Romulus, the famous founder of Rome, was descended; are we to attribute any value at all to so confident an assertion? To debate such a question is like trying to read a book when the twilight of dawn

has only just begun; so let us leave it undebated, and pass on. In any case, the founders of Rome came of a stock which was predominantly Latin; it may be added, predominantly agricultural in their type of life and character: yet a warlike prescience must also have been in these founders when they seized on this situation by the side of the principal river of middle Italy for their settled abode. It is probable that they had an eye to defence rather than to commerce; but the river was a means of commerce also, and Rome began early to have wider intercourse with the outer world than Alba Longa, out of which Romulus is said to have come, could possibly have enjoyed.

Whatever be true, whatever untrue, of those picturesque stories which tell us of the early kings of ancient Rome, the important points to remember about the Romans of that period are, first, that they had a character full of warlike grit; next, that they were religious. Whence came their religion? Obviously there are analogies in it to the Greek religion (as there are in the Latin language to the Greek language); but we have reason to say also that much in it was derived from the Etruscans (who themselves were indebted to the Greeks); and finally there were original elements, some valuable and some merely superstitious. The admixture of superstition in primitive religions is a matter of course; "the effective desire to be in right relation with the Power manifesting itself in the universe" (so runs the definition of religion quoted by Mr Warde Fowler from an American author) cannot be pure as long as the conception of that Power is imperfect. These ancient Romans trembled at the unknown forest and mountain for reasons which excite our smile to-day: they devised ceremonies and sacrifices that had no rational ground; they imposed disabilities adverse to personal liberty. But a more sane and worthy view was not wanting to them also. Thus they valued the family, and all pertaining to the family—the household, the glowing hearth, the store of necessary provisions, the land out of whose bosom the sustenance of life came. Not untruly were Divine Powers held to be interested in these primary needs of men: and if the Romans held the Penates, and the Lares, and Vesta, to be deities independent and separate, this was not, as a first sketch of immature religion, a very harmful error. Not untruly also was the discipline of the family regarded as under the sanction of Divine Powers: and if the rule of the *paterfamilias* sometimes degenerated into tyranny, yet in the more normal affairs of daily life there was strength in his authority. When the



Romans called their great council of state not merely the council of old men (*senatus*), but also the Fathers (*patres*), this was a tribute to the family bond the significance of which we cannot mistake.

Polytheists the Romans were, and this was not unnatural: nor can we dignify their worship of Janus, of Diana, of Minerva, with any profound moral meaning; nor even their worship of Mars, though he may seem a deity specially Roman, and though the worship of this wild superhuman being may really have administered to the warlike courage of the people who conceived themselves akin to him. But a nobler worship, and one which cannot be left unnoticed, was that of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Jupiter, like the Greek Zeus (the names are really identical) is the God of heaven; and something of monotheism, something of infinite power, is implied in such a name. We have reason to say that the worship of Jupiter was widely spread in Italy; but when those other exalted titles, Optimus Maximus ("Best and Greatest"), were added to the name, a more universal moral government of the world was implied in the Deity so conceived than is commonly recognised among primitive peoples. It is true that in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus (where Jupiter was honoured as "Best and Greatest") Juno also and Minerva were worshipped; but the unquestioned precedence belonged to Jupiter. Now this great temple was begun by the first of those kings of Rome whose lineage was confessedly from Etruria, Tarquinius Priscus; it was continued by his successors; and it was finally dedicated, after the expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus and the establishment of the republic, by the consul Horatius, in the year 509 B.C. But was the title "Best and Greatest" as applied to Jupiter due to the original thought of the Etruscan kings of Rome, or was it the expression of the fervid gratitude of the Roman people after they had expelled their tyrants? We cannot tell; but to the kings of Etruscan origin some of the merit of building it was certainly due; and if any one doubted the real existence of those kings, it ought to go some way towards removing these doubts when we learn that the temple "was built in the Etruscan style, that its foundations were of Etruscan masonry<sup>1</sup>."

Where an alleged historical fact serves to explain the lines of historical development, this is considerable reason for holding that historical fact to be true: and we have this special reason for believing the historical reality of that king of Rome who came after Tarquinius Priscus (and who himself also seems to have been

<sup>1</sup> Warde Fowler, *Roman Religious Experience*, p. 237.

an Etruscan<sup>1</sup>) namely Servius Tullius, that to him is attributed the authorship of that assembly of citizens, which must have had some individual author, which was called the *comitia centuriata*. It would not be correct to call the *comitia centuriata* a parliament, for the purpose of it was not to speak, but to vote, though informal public speaking was natural, and could not be prevented, in connexion with such voting; but even though not a parliament, the appointment of this assembly was one of the most important facts in all Roman history, and Servius Tullius was one of the truest benefactors of his country that ever lived. The *comitia centuriata* must not indeed be thought of as a democratic assembly. It was military in the way in which the voters were drawn up and the votes counted (the "century" being a well-known military division); and not only so, but the classes of centuries were so distributed, and the centuries were so constituted, that if the wealthier citizens were agreed upon any measure (or against any measure), they carried the day against any combination of the poorer citizens; and as the wealthier citizens voted first, it generally happened that the poorer citizens were not called upon to vote at all. Popular rights, as far as this assembly was concerned, were thus merely in their beginnings; but yet they *were* in their beginnings and were not an absolute nullity; that the whole people should ever be called upon to vote at all was in the nature of a concession by the rich to the poor. Moreover, though the *comitia centuriata* had no impress of democracy about it, there was in it a reminder of the possibility of an assembly that should have such an impress. Nor ought the advantage to be overlooked that a slow development of liberty is likely to be more permanent (as arousing fewer antagonisms) than a quick development.

Servius Tullius was good and wise; his successor, if we believe the traditional narrative (and I think we may believe the main features of it) was wicked and, though not a fool, was far from being wise. Tarquinius Superbus (or the "Proud") is said to have been the murderer of Servius Tullius; and he established a cruel despotism at Rome. Then for his misdeeds he was driven out (for the Romans were not powerless) and the republic was established; two consuls, elected annually, took the place of the king, and during their year of office wielded the same power which the king had wielded.

But king Tarquin sought the help of king Porsena, an Etruscan

<sup>1</sup> Warde Fowler, pp. 237, 245.



king whose capital was Clusium in Etruria; and king Porsena came to his help with a great army, and Rome was obliged to surrender. Tarquin might thus have been restored, had not Porsena, elated with his victory, pressed on to the conquest of all the Latin cities. The Greeks from Cumæ came to the aid of the Latins, and Porsena was badly defeated by them, and was henceforth compelled to confine his dominion to the Etruscan side of the river Tiber. Thus, though the Romans lost the territory which they had previously possessed on the Etruscan side of the Tiber, they saved that much more valuable possession—their freedom. Moreover, though the Romans, in their hour of defeat, had bound<sup>1</sup> themselves to Porsena not to use iron for any except agricultural purposes, it is not to be supposed that they regarded this engagement as binding on them, when Porsena was no longer able to enforce it.

With this epoch the real heart of Roman history begins. Free the Romans were after the retreat of Porsena, but feeble; in 220 years, after the termination of the third Samnite war, they had become the strongest power in Italy; and it needed but another century to prove their superiority in arms over every country that bordered on the Mediterranean Sea. By virtue of what qualities, and through what actions, did they achieve so wonderful an advance?

There was a disposition among the Romans themselves to attribute their victorious progress to the religious disposition of their race in the earlier stages of their history. Thus Cicero told the senate<sup>2</sup>:

Let us cherish what self-love we like, Conscript Fathers, yet we are not more numerous than the Spaniards, nor more muscular than the Gauls, nor more clever than the Carthaginians, nor more artistic than the Greeks, nor better endowed with homely natural feeling than the Italians themselves and specially the Latins; but it is in piety and religious duty and in this single piece of wisdom, that we have understood all things to be ruled and governed by the will of the immortal gods, this it is in which we have surpassed all races and all nations.

Such a boast, though not without some portion of truth, cannot be accepted by us in its entirety. Never, not even in the years of the growing republic, had the citizens of Rome so deep a sense of the connexion of religion with the moral duties of men as had

<sup>1</sup> Pliny xxxiv. 14. This passage, together with Tacitus, *Hist.* iii. 72, disproves Livy's romantic story of the defence of the bridge by Horatius Cocles. For the defeat of Porsena by the Latins and Greeks, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus v. 36 and vii. 2-11. I take these references from Arnold's *History of Rome*, vol. i. pp. 127-8.

<sup>2</sup> *De Harusp. resp.* 19.

the Hebrew prophets or even some of the Greek philosophers and poets. The effective cause of the Roman conquest of the western world was more complex, and not so pure, as Cicero represents it in the remarkable passage which I have just quoted from him.

It will be the best preliminary to showing what the actual state of the case was, if I quote from Cicero another passage, which apparently says the same thing as the passage already quoted, but says it with a difference.

"If we wish to compare ourselves with foreign nations," he says, "in other matters we shall be found not more than equal to them, or perhaps even inferior; but in religion, that is, in worship of the gods, we are much superior to them." Cicero, *De Naturâ Deorum*, II. 8.

"In worship of the gods," Cicero says, the Romans surpassed other nations; but this is not the same as surpassing other nations in the religious spirit, which is what he had said in the previous passage. It is not the same, because worship may be external only; and as a matter of fact this was the sad and serious defect of the religion of ancient Rome, that as time went on it became more and more external, more and more a collection of forms and ceremonies, less and less an inspiring motive towards noble and philanthropic acts. This decay was taking place during the whole period of three centuries which separated the beginning of the republic from the times of Hannibal, or from the year 510 B.C. to the year 202 B.C., when Hannibal was overthrown. A certain recovery took place later on through that portion of the religious spirit which had been rescued by Greek philosophy, and which was absorbed eagerly by the highest Roman minds of the second and first centuries before Christ, and for long afterwards. But the religious spirit inherent in Greek philosophy never penetrated into the great mass of men; and I need not say that the Roman dominance over the world had not its origin in any inspiration drawn from that source.

Let me return to primitive Rome, to the times of the early republic, and endeavour to show in the broad sequence of the ensuing centuries what was the cause of the victorious career of Rome. Religion was partly the cause, it is true; for religion kept the Romans from irredeemable follies, and curbed the arrogance of individual men. But religion in them became associated with another feeling, became almost absorbed into another feeling, which though honourable in itself was not religious, and was capable of working injury to other nations; the love of Rome as Rome. Of such a patriotic feeling the Romans were no unique



example in antiquity; but they were unique in the degree in which they avoided its dangers; they did not avoid all its dangers, but they avoided those which might have wrecked them palpably and utterly. We shall see this, if we compare the history of Rome with the history of two other famous cities, Jerusalem and Athens. All three cities, Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem, entered upon the most important phase of their respective histories at approximately the same time, that is towards the close of the sixth century before Christ; and perhaps the most burning and enthusiastic love was that which the Jews felt for Jerusalem. But the legislation of Ezra, when Jerusalem had been finally reestablished, narrowed the Jewish mind under the pretext that this narrowness was a religious duty; and the noble qualities of the Jews could not in the end preserve the city of their love from conquest, or themselves from dispersion into the distant corners of the earth. The Athenians were strangely unbalanced, and attended far too little to the internal organisation of their city and of themselves as its citizens; nor had they any flexibility as far as their citizenship was concerned; they drew in no fresh blood from outside. Hence they were incapable of infusing vigour into the Greek race as a whole; they themselves fell into inanition, though their achievements are in many respects a possession to the world for ever. But the Romans, with all their love for Rome, had the good sense to make their citizenship an expanding citizenship; and it was the combination of these two qualities, their devotion to their own city, and yet their willingness to expand their citizenship, which was the chief cause of their conquering career. It may be asked, whether the motive which I ascribe to them is a religious motive? It was not a simply religious motive, and it had many defects from the point of view of true religion; but there was much faithfulness in it and much generosity, and these are qualities which are fostered even by an imperfect religion, provided it be sincere; and the native Roman religion had for a long time great sincerity.

Let me illustrate the guiding principle which I have just mentioned by going through some of the details of Roman history. Even under the early kings, if tradition in any degree speaks truth, Sabines and Latins and Etruscans were received as citizens into the Roman city on equal terms with the original inhabitants; courage and capacity gave a certain claim to equal rights, though consanguinity were absent. But the strain and struggle which had to be undergone before it could be determined that this

expanding citizenship should be a principle of Roman development, took place after the kings had been driven out. The Romans after that crisis had retained their liberty, but poverty had come along with it; they had suffered a reduction in power, in wealth; and the poorest of them were overburdened with debts. Now these poorest of the Romans, though not absolutely and under all circumstances deprived of a vote in the *comitia centuriata*, were not reckoned as part of the "*populus*," the Roman people; they were "*plebs*," plebeians; and the Roman aristocracy did not consider themselves bound to the plebeians by those considerations of humanity which they would have recognised as due to their equals. Hence a plebeian who could not pay his debts might be sold for a slave or might be forced to undergo any, even the extremest, cruelty. Fifteen years after the kings had been driven out, the misery of the plebeians reached a point which, to brave men, became unendurable. Their numbers were probably not inferior to the numbers of their oppressors, the patricians; but in military force they must have been greatly inferior; and of armed resistance they never thought. Then there flashed upon them a thought, a resolution, which had no doubt some first begetter, but which was so congenial to them all, that no definite leadership was needed in the execution of it; to abandon that city which had not acknowledged them as her true children, and to build a new city for themselves where they might live securely. So they left Rome and marched to the river Anio, which flows into the Tiber a few miles above Rome; they crossed the Anio, and established themselves on a hill which thenceforward was called the "*Mons Sacer*," or Sacred Mount, from a remembrance of the great compact that was made there.

Next, we read (and what we read certainly contains some portion of truth) that the patricians, dismayed at this weakening of their city by the secession of so large a portion of its population, determined among themselves that the case was not one for compelling, but rather for persuading (if possible) the plebeians to return; and they sent an embassy to the plebeians. The spokesman of this embassy, Menenius Agrippa, was a man favourably regarded by the plebeians, and an orator of some power. He, it is said, addressed the plebeians with the following fable—which, well known though it is, it may be permissible to quote here:

Once upon a time the members of the body were not, as now, harmonious, but each severally had his own thought and his own way of expressing it; then were the remaining parts of the body indignant with



the belly, which, they said, was nourished by their care, labour, and service; the belly, at rest in the middle place, had nothing to do but to enjoy the pleasures accorded to it. Therefore they entered into an agreement, that the hand should not bring food to the mouth, neither should the mouth accept the food when given, neither should the teeth crush it. Desiring, in this angry temper, to subdue the belly by hunger, the members themselves and the whole body came to the verge of dissolution. Thus was it made plain, that the belly had no indolent office; that it contributed to nourishment as much as it received nourishment; seeing that it dispersed into all the limbs of the body that by which we live and grow, namely the blood, apportioned equally into all the veins with ripened energy after we have eaten food. Livy II. 32.

The plebeians, we read, were persuaded, and returned to Rome; but not without having secured from the patricians a concession of the highest importance; namely, that two tribunes should be appointed, themselves plebeians, to whose charge the security of the plebeians should be entrusted. The persons of the tribunes were declared to be sacred and inviolable; and should they have cognisance of wrong done to any plebeian, either in respect of undue pressure for the payment of his debts or in respect of the exactment of military service from him, very large powers were given them for remedying the wrong. Indeed these plebeian tribunes had the power also of protecting patricians, and sometimes used that power. I need not set forth in detail all the means assigned to the tribunes for vindicating their authority; nor need I enter into the questions concerning the manner of their election, or the number of them in the early years after their first appointment. In less than fifty years after the secession of the plebeians to the Sacred Mount we find that the number of the tribunes of the plebs was ten, and this number was never departed from in the later history.

But what cannot be left untold (however familiar it be to the reader of Roman history) is that right which became finally (even if not from the first) the distinctive power of the tribunes of the plebs, the right possessed by each one of them individually of stopping any piece of the State machinery (or the whole, it would seem) by his single prohibitory voice. A conspicuous instance of the exercise of this power is recorded in the 35th chapter of the sixth book of Livy. Two of the tribunes of the plebs had brought forward bills of a kind greatly adverse to the peculiar prerogatives of the patricians, and these bills, in the natural course of things, would have been brought before the comitia for decision. But the patricians tried to bar these bills from the outset, so that they should not even be brought before the comitia.

Accordingly they induced some of the tribunes of the plebs, who happened to be favourable to the patricians, to interpose their "veto" (possibly these tribunes were clients of some of the patricians); the effect they desired was produced; the bills were barred. But Sextius, one of the two tribunes who were promoting the bills, turned round upon the patricians and said: "Very well, Fathers of the State; you are greatly pleased with our colleagues' veto; see how you will like ours." And he prohibited *all* comitia from being held, in which patrician magistrates could be elected. And Livy tells us (what is rather hard to believe) that for five years there was an entire absence of the higher magistrates in Rome.

Whether the above narrative be exactly true or not, there is no doubt that things like it took place: and well may Mommsen<sup>1</sup> say:

We have an evidence of the strong civic spirit of the people in the fact, not that it embraced such a constitution, but that it endured it, and that the community, notwithstanding the most vehement convulsions, held together.

Strange indeed it is that any people should have enacted that the whole action of the State was to be frozen into inertness, if some lowborn official by his mere single word resolved that so it should be! But it is a signal proof of the superiority of the moral temper to intellectual perspicacity in the affairs of men that the citizens of Rome did, for nearly three centuries after the establishment of the tribunes of the plebs, actually grow in mutual harmony and in effective force. The most unlikely measures may prove salutary, if a salutary will is behind them.

Is it not plain—whatever be the uncertainty as to the details of these ancient records, and whatever may have been the barbarity and cruelty of individual Romans—that the Roman people were flexible and not rigid in their conception of the meaning of a State, flexible and not rigid in their actual practice of determining who were their fellow-citizens? The famous fable of Menenius Agrippa does not for a moment give up the principle that the aristocracy are the rightful rulers of a State; that principle is involved in the terms of it; but it does most emphatically recognise that the plebeians are fellow-citizens. We may be sure that it was not all the patricians who would gladly have admitted this; but this was the dominant feeling of the Roman people in that age, and it was a feeling that had its parallels in their treatment

<sup>1</sup> *History of Rome*, Book II. ch. 2.



of aliens in the after history. Provided the majesty of Rome was secure (but that indeed was an essential condition) the Romans were quite willing to admit others to share in their citizenship.

Nor was it only in their general conception of citizenship, but also in their practice on many matters which did not affect principle directly (though they could not help doing so indirectly), that the Romans showed a flexibility, an equability of mind, rare among ancient peoples. We read in Livy (II. 55, 56) that when the plebeian Volero had been within an ace of being scourged by the order of the consuls, and had only set himself free by his uncommon strength, having been after this elected tribune of the plebs, he sought no compensation for his personal wrongs, but brought in a bill that plebeian magistrates should henceforth be elected in the *comitia tributa*<sup>1</sup> (a form of public assembly which did not exclude the patricians, but in which they had not the predominance which they had in the *comitia centuriata*). And this bill was actually carried, and became law, a year later; not, it is true, without great danger of civil strife, perhaps even of civil war; but both on the side of the plebeians, and on the side of the patricians, there were mitigating influences at work, by which the fiercer passions were subdued.

This is no isolated instance in Roman history; as we go on from decade to decade, from century to century, we perceive that the people of Rome were not narrow tempered; they wished to associate with their State, and on terms not wholly unequal, all those on whose loyalty and friendliness they could rely. It is true that the degree in which they allowed those various rights which constituted citizenship to be possessed by the inhabitants of towns in Latium and other parts of Italy was very different in different cases; but just as deliberate forethought, and not passion, was the agency whereby patricians and plebeians were finally reconciled at Rome, and became one people, so it was deliberate forethought, and not passion, by which the Romans gradually united to themselves the towns and the peoples in other parts of Italy. The complexity of the various systems of civic rights which prevailed in Italy, wherever Rome was dominant, was great, and far beyond any possibility of being described in the present chapter; but there was no rigidity in the Roman

<sup>1</sup> No account has reached us how the particular form of assembly called the *comitia tributa* came into existence. The actual assembling by tribes would be easier than the assembling by centuries; and this would be the first motive for it (probably); but it would soon be felt to favour the plebs.

procedure; and thus it came to pass that, in the end, all Italians looked with pride to Rome, as the mother-city of the world.

Deep, then, in the heart of the Roman people lay those qualities of moderation and sane judgment which made of Rome the typical ruling city, by desert as well as in fact, of all ancient times; but it is not to be concealed that these qualities received a point, a penetrating force, through another motive, less praiseworthy, less accordant with a truly divine spirit. The Romans desired to be just; but they were resolved that, if by any action of their own they could possibly secure it, Rome should be chief above all her rivals. It may perhaps be said that the wish to be chief was natural. It was so; but to make it a motive of the first rank brought dangerous temptations with it. Rome gave way to these temptations just as Athens had given way to them; but Athens, in giving way to them, had incurred signal defeat and disaster; the forethought, the calm judgment, of the Romans saved them from such a calamity as this. But none the less was the relentless determination of the Romans, not to endure a rival dominion to their own, a calamity to the world at large; the fact that this jealous sentiment was so common in ancient times did not in the least mitigate the disastrous nature of its consequences. Rivals whom Rome really feared, when once they had been subdued, were destroyed utterly. The first of such rivals was the great Etruscan city of Veii; this, after uneasy relations of alternate war and peace had existed for nearly ninety years, the Romans captured in 393 B.C., and all the inhabitants who were not slain in the assault were sold for slaves. The cities of Latium had a population too nearly akin to the Romans in blood, and too much associated with them by past alliances, for such an internecine conflict to be probable in their case. But when, in the year 339 B.C., the Latin cities proposed to unite with Rome so as to make a single country of which Rome was to be the capital, the Latin cities to have collectively an equal voting power with the single city of Rome, and also to elect one out of the two consuls, who were to be the chief officers of the united State, the Romans took such offence at the proposal (which it must be admitted had been presented in rather a discourteous manner<sup>1</sup>) that they immediately joined forces with the Samnites, who were then at war with the Latin cities. With the help of the Samnites, the Romans subdued the Latins, and forced them to accept a treaty which made them distinctly and absolutely subordinate to Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Livy viii. 5.



Next came the turn of the Samnites. It is probable that the Samnites, one of the bravest and most warlike peoples in Italy, were not altogether unwilling to try conclusions with the Romans; but still the provocation came on the whole from the Roman side; and if we may judge by the chivalrous forbearance of the Samnites after they had had the Roman army at their mercy in the pass of Caudium, that people did really desire an honourable peace as the end of the conflict. But the Romans would have no peace on terms of equality; victorious they must be, or they would not end the war. They resumed it in spite of the oaths of their own consuls to promote peace, and did not cease till the power of the Samnites was utterly broken. That unfortunate people retained something of their pristine vigour for two centuries afterwards; and then what remained of them was destroyed by one of the fiercest tyrants whom republican Rome produced, Sulla.

Neither was it without some treachery on their own part that the Romans engaged in their first war with Carthage, in 264 B.C.; and though their deadly struggle with Hannibal, which began in 218 B.C., was forced on them by that great warrior, and the Romans deserve our esteem both in the course of that war and in the result of it, yet in the third Punic war, the assault on Carthage came wholly and absolutely from the Roman side, and was prompted by no just cause, but simply by the bitter jealousy and suspicion which the Romans felt towards a foe who had once been so strong. Their destruction of Carthage in 146 B.C. must be reckoned as one of their greatest national sins. Nor was the destruction of Numantia, in the year 124 B.C., an act at all less condemnable; the courage of the people of Numantia, not any fault of which they had been guilty, was the cause which made the Romans wipe them out from among the peoples of the earth. No other formal act of the Roman republic equalled these which I have just named in wickedness; but the tyranny which made the Jews revolt, and which led to their overthrow by Titus in the year 70 A.D., had its first motive in the resentment of the Romans at any people holding their heads so high as the Jews did, and esteeming themselves the elect of the earth. That was a motive which marks the Romans as tyrannous.

In the brief sketch of the Roman character which I have just been giving, I have left unmentioned some of the most important single points of their history; for instance, the first beginnings of their written law, as made by their decemvirs in the fifth century before Christ; nor have I been able to narrate

the detailed steps by which the plebeians obtained equality with the patricians, which embraced such different points as the concession of intermarriage with the patricians, a knowledge of the religious festivals on which business might not be transacted, and the enlargement of the powers of the *comitia tributa*, in which the plebeians had the greatest influence. Nor have I mentioned some of the most important points of the external history of Rome; that great catastrophe, the capture and burning of Rome by the Gauls, at the beginning of the fourth century before Christ; or the whole story of the growth of Roman power in Greece and in the east, which, though not without some features of arrogance, had much in it that was truly creditable.

But I have desired to show clearly, before everything else, the moral type of the Roman character; its sanity, its moderation, its willingness to listen to equitable reasonings, in all the ordinary affairs of men; its flexibility and expansiveness; and withal that other element, which cannot be reckoned as wholly bad, and which gave so much strength and definiteness to Roman action, and which yet was so full of danger—the central resolve that Rome should never be content with any but the first place among the powers of the earth. We must say that such a resolve, when pressed to the extreme limit, was bad; and bad, because inhuman; and thus, while the Romans were outwardly the most successful nation of the western world, and did in a certain sense solve the question how a single city could rule over great continents with undisputed sway, this success was not accomplished without the destruction of much that was truly valuable, without a weakening of moral fibre and of intelligent purpose among those who came under the rule of Rome.

It will be some evidence on the important question, how far religion was a true cause of the nobler side of that character which I have just depicted, if I quote the testimony of the Greek historian Polybius. The birth of Polybius lay just before the close of the second Punic war, at the period when Roman endurance and discipline had surmounted the most terrible strain to which it was ever exposed, and before the corrupting influences of eastern luxury had begun to flow in upon the conquerors. Polybius was a friend of some of the noblest Romans, notably of the younger Scipio, and of the father of that Scipio, *Æmilius Paulus*. He thus saw the Romans (at any rate in all his youthful days) from their best side; and the worst development of their faults came in the main afterwards; but as giving the honourable causes



of the Roman success, the following passage is very noticeable:

The most important difference for the better which the Roman commonwealth appears to me to display is in their religious beliefs. For I conceive that what in other nations is looked upon as a reproach, I mean a scrupulous fear of the gods, is the very thing which keeps the Roman commonwealth together. To such an extraordinary height is this carried among them, both in public and private business, that nothing could exceed it. Many people might think this unaccountable; but in my opinion their object is to use it as a check upon the common people. If it were possible to form a State wholly of philosophers, such a custom would perhaps be unnecessary. But seeing that every multitude is fickle, and full of lawless desires, unreasoning anger, and violent passion, the only resource is to keep them in check by mysterious terrors and scenic effects of this sort. Wherefore, to my mind, the ancients were not acting without purpose or at random, when they brought in among the vulgar those opinions about the gods, and the belief in the punishments in Hades; much rather do I think that men nowadays are acting rashly and foolishly in rejecting them. This is the reason why, apart from anything else, Greek statesmen, if entrusted with a single talent, though protected by ten checking clerks, as many seals, and twice as many witnesses, yet cannot be induced to keep faith: whereas among the Romans, in their magistracies and embassies, men have the handling of a great amount of money, and yet from pure respect to their oath keep their faith intact. And, again, in other nations it is a rare thing to find a man who keeps his hands out of the public purse, and is entirely pure in such matters: but among the Romans it is a rare thing to detect a man in the act of committing such a crime<sup>1</sup>.

It will be seen that Polybius, in spite of his strong conviction that the Roman religious belief was the cause of that trustworthiness and honesty which he discerned in the Roman character, yet cannot bring himself to share that belief; he regards it as a delusion, though a beneficent delusion. It is strange that it never occurred to him (what certainly had occurred to Socrates and Plato) that a belief which in its actual form is imaginative and delusive may yet have an underlying substance of truth, and that it is this kernel of truth which makes it beneficent. But the whole Greek and Roman mythological system had been deeply discredited in the eyes of all thinking persons in the time of Polybius, and the doctrine of a future life suffered in this general disesteem. It was impossible to replace it as it had been, and before the end of the second century before Christ, scepticism had invaded the Romans also, and the Roman character no longer remained what it had been a century earlier. Some compensation lay in the noble

<sup>1</sup> Polybius vi. 56 (translation by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh).

Greek philosophy, which now diffused itself among the Romans also; but this did not reach the mass of men.

The great expansion of Roman power which took place in the second century before Christ produced one calamitous sequence, of no new kind, but new in the actual form which it took. The inequality between patricians and plebeians, as such, had been brought to its close by the *Lex Hortensia*<sup>1</sup> in the year 287 B.C. But by that time the distinction between patricians and plebeians no longer meant, as at first, the distinction between the rich and the poor. Plebeians were becoming wealthy; on the other hand, Rome (as years went on) began to be the resort of needy immigrants from other parts of Italy, or even from beyond Italy, who had acquired no rights of citizenship, or perhaps imperfect rights of citizenship, so that they had no vote in the comitia, and therefore no political influence. Rome, even in the second century, was beginning to be that "colluvies omnium gentium," that receptacle of men, the greater part of whom were an unorganised multitude, which it became more completely afterwards.

How great the evil, and how great the danger, of such a condition, will be obvious. In earlier times relief had come to the poorer citizens of Rome by their being sent out as colonists into those territories of Italy which Rome had won by the sword; and though the Italians may have suffered, Rome preserved its well-being and its capacity for making further conquests. Moreover, in order that the poor might really benefit in this way, laws were passed limiting the amount of public land (*i.e.* of land won by the whole state) which any single individual might possess: 500 jugera (rather more than 300 acres or nearly half a square mile) was the maximum allowed. It is the opinion of Arnold (and it seems a reasonable one) that till the latter part of the third century before Christ, the population of Rome did in this way maintain true progress in general welfare. But then came the terrible war with Hannibal; and it was all that Rome could do, by the valour of her sons and by the help of the outposts she had established all over Italy, to stand against that furious tempest. And though Rome was victorious, victory itself produced a change in her inmost character, which was not for good. Her arms carried the Roman name and the Roman power to the east and to the west, over great tracts of fertile country in Europe, Asia,

<sup>1</sup> The precise effect of this law is disputed; I cannot but think that the true meaning of it was that very simple and broad meaning, to give finally and without dispute the value of law, binding on all Romans, to all decisions of the comitia tributa.



and Africa; the wealth of all the nations flowed into her; and her rich men could no longer be restrained by any law prescribing a technical limit to the amount of their possessions. During the second century before Christ, all over Italy, the small farmers felt their inability to maintain themselves against their rich neighbours; they sold their lands and migrated to Rome, and the rich who bought the lands used slave labour for their cultivation. The free brave husbandman of earlier days, the father of a family, capable of defending both his household and his country, gradually disappeared; the cities became full; and the city population was apt to be both idle and turbulent. Nor were even the rich satisfied; they contended with each other for supremacy; and though civil war in its most serious form did not begin till the first century before Christ, there were premonitions of it earlier, and most especially in the riots which caused the death of the Gracchi. The two Gracchi, Tiberius and Caius, were the ineffectual wise men of Rome (just as Demosthenes had been the ineffectual wise man of Athens); they estimated the danger which menaced their country accurately, and they brought in laws, which on the whole we cannot but commend, to remedy the evil and avert the danger; but it was beyond their power to carry out their design, and they perished in the attempt, Tiberius in 133 B.C., Caius twelve years later.

The deepest difficulties of the Roman republic began from that moment; but here let me pause, and revert to the morality and the religion which had been in the worthier times which had gone before. Perhaps this is the best place to quote that elaborate and interesting comparison of the Greek and Roman religions which the recent great historian of Rome, Mommsen, gives towards the end of the second chapter of the first book of his *History of Rome*:

“In Italy, as in Hellas,” writes Mommsen, “there lies at the foundation of the popular faith the same common treasure of symbolic and allegorical views of nature; on this rests that general analogy between the Roman and the Greek world of gods and spirits which was to become of so much importance in later stages of development. In many of their particular conceptions also...the two modes of worship do not by mere accident coincide. Yet in Hellas, as in Italy, they assumed a shape so thoroughly national and peculiar, that but little of the ancient common inheritance was preserved in a recognisable form....

“The Greek, when the thunder rolled among the mountains, saw Zeus brandishing his bolts on Olympus; when the blue sky again smiled upon him, he gazed into the bright eye of Athenæa, the daughter of Zeus; but so powerful over him was the influence of the forms which he had thus created, that he soon saw nothing in them but human beings invested and

illuminated with the splendour of nature's power, and freely formed and transformed them according to the laws of beauty. It was in another fashion, but not less strongly, that the deeply implanted religious feeling of the Italian race manifested itself; it held firmly by the idea, and did not suffer the form to obscure it. As the Greek, when he sacrificed, raised his eyes to heaven, so the Roman veiled his head; for the prayer of the former was vision, that of the latter reflection. Throughout the whole of nature he adored the spiritual and the universal. To everything existing, to man and to the tree, to the state and to the storeroom, a spirit was assigned, which came into being with it, and perished along with it; the counterpart in the spiritual domain of the physical phenomenon; to the man the male Genius, to the woman the female Juno, to the boundary Terminus, to the forest Silvanus, to the circling year Vertumnus, and so on to every object after its kind. In occupations even the steps of the process were spiritualised; thus, for example, in the prayers for the husbandman there was invoked the spirit of fallowing, of ploughing, of furrowing, sowing, covering-in, harrowing, and so on to those of in-bringing, up-storing, and opening of the granaries. In like manner, marriage, birth, and every other physical event were endowed with sacred life. The larger the sphere embraced in the abstraction, the higher rose the god, and the reverence paid by man. Thus Jupiter and Juno are the abstractions of manhood and womanhood; Dea Dia, or Ceres, the creative power; Minerva, the power of memory; Dea Bona, or among the Samnites Dea Cupra, the good Divinity....

"Thus the two nations, in which the civilisation of antiquity culminated, stand side by side as different in development as they were in origin identical. The points in which the Hellenes excel the Italians are more universally intelligible, and reflect a more brilliant lustre; but the deep feeling in each individual that he was only a part of the community, a rare devotedness and power of self-sacrifice for the common weal, an earnest faith in its own gods, formed the rich treasure of the Italian nation. Both nations received a one-sided and therefore each a complete, development; it is only a pitiful narrow-mindedness that will object to the Athenian, that he did not know how to mould his state like the Fabii and the Valerii; or to the Roman, that he did not learn to carve like Phidias, and to write like Aristophanes. It was in fact the most peculiar and the best feature in the character of the Greek people, which rendered it impossible for them to advance from national to political unity without at the same time exchanging their polity for despotism. The ideal world of beauty was all in all to the Greeks, and compensated them to some extent for what they wanted in reality. Wherever in Hellas a tendency towards national union appeared, it was based, not on influences directly political, but on games and art: the contests at Olympia, the poems of Homer, the tragedies of Euripides, were the only bonds that held Hellas together. Resolutely, on the other hand, the Italian surrendered his own personal will for the sake of freedom, and learned to obey his father that he might know how to obey the State. In such subjection as this individual development might be marred, and the germs of fairest promise in man might be arrested in the bud; the Italian gained instead a feeling of fatherland and of patriotism such as the Greek never knew, and alone among all the civilised nations of antiquity, succeeded in working out national unity in connexion with a constitution based on self-government—a national unity, which at last placed in his



hands the supremacy, not only over the divided Hellenic stock, but over the whole known world."

As far as the Roman religion is concerned, the exposition in that passage is admirable; the reflective spirit of the Roman, and his willingness to sacrifice himself for the sake of the State, are justly dwelt upon; and the reader will see how that moderation of temper, and absence of narrowness in dealing with all friendly persons, which I have noted as causes of the constant unbroken development of Rome in the early centuries, sprang from the religious disposition described by Mommsen. One quality of the Romans which I have not yet mentioned, which on the whole was good though it had its weak side, was their humility in matters of religion; they were willing to learn, in their earliest days from the Etruscans, afterwards from the Greeks; they never thought they had attained to the acme of knowledge in this sphere. It is true that this quality was accompanied by one drawback, that the obedience which it implied was liable to become mechanical; there was some want of the upward spontaneous leap of the individual soul, out of its own natural needs, to the Divine Power; and hence that careful organisation of religion which went on in the Roman state during the three centuries of the early republic (from its beginning onwards) was coincident with a gradual drying up of the first sources of religion in the Roman spirit<sup>1</sup>. Thus true religion had to be renewed from outside; and Greek philosophy, learned by the Romans in the course of the second century before Christ, did in fact supply (and especially in its Stoic form) a current of real piety, pure though not impetuous, which was of great service to the ruling minds of Rome during the two or three centuries which followed.

But now let me say that Mommsen, in the passage I have quoted, is less complete in his characterisation of the Greek religion, than in his characterisation of the Roman religion. It is the popular Greek religion which he describes; the religion of Homer and Hesiod, utilised half jestingly by Aristophanes, cautiously satirised by Euripides, and again more or less revived by Theocritus in the court of the Ptolemies. But Mommsen's remarks do not at all apply to that deep channel of religious feeling which emerged first in the Orphic mysteries and in the school of Pythagoras; which appears in Pindar and Æschylus and Sophocles, and again, mingled with a critical element, in Socrates; which

<sup>1</sup> This is one of Mr Warde Fowler's most important observations; see his *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, pp. 226-8.

Plato received and handed down, and which among all the doubts which advancing knowledge was sure to bring and did bring, preserved and nurtured the habit of reverence among Greek philosophers.

From these Greek philosophers it flowed eventually into the greatest minds of Rome. There was a second flowering time of religion in Italy, after the first had decayed; and we must not for a moment think that, in the first century before Christ, the hearts of the noblest Italians had ceased to beat with the impulse that searches after things invisible. The philosophical pages of Cicero will show us how far this was from being the case; and Cicero, it must be remembered, gathered up into brief compass the thoughts which had been growing throughout Italy for a hundred years before his date. Impossible as it is to deny the political degradation which had come upon Italy during those hundred years, through the covetousness and pride of the rich, and through the bloody civil wars of Marius and Sulla, it must still be said that there were many on Italian soil who nobly contended against that degradation. The famous line of Terence—

*Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto*

—though derived probably from his Greek models, was received with applause by the Romans; and the political rights which the Romans voluntarily accorded to the Italians after the close of the Marsic war were an evidence that they would have equalised the rights of all men, had it been in their power to do so. But the solution of that great problem, how to accord equal rights to all men, is still beyond us in the twentieth century after Christ; how much more was it beyond the men of two thousand years ago!

Let me in this place pay a tribute, which ought not to be withheld, to the more honourable position accorded to women in Rome and Italy than was accorded to them in Greece, and still more as compared with their position in the greater number of oriental States (among the Jews however it would seem that greater honour was paid to them). The superiority of the Romans in this respect was no doubt due to their greater sanity and more studious observance of right in everyday intercourse, as compared with the ordinary temper of the Greeks; they were more generous in these homely matters than the Greeks were; and they did not altogether lose this characteristic even in that period of civil war and bloodshed which ushered in the close of the republican times.

Yet, when we take the profoundest points of morality, Greece was the teacher of Rome. That is the final point which must be



urged in favour of the Greeks; but, having said it, the proficiency of the pupils is the final theme of this chapter.

I have spoken of Cicero; and though Cicero as a philosopher has not the brilliance of Plato, nor the immense range of thought of Aristotle, yet he has a common-sense, an impartiality, a tenderness of feeling, which makes him not an unworthy follower of those great Greeks. He was, besides, a political power in Rome; and if he, and the great and magnanimous soldier Pompey, and the entire senate of Rome, fell before the victorious arms of Cæsar, it must not be assumed that the cause of the senate was therefore initially a bad one, or even a hopeless one after Cæsar's victory. That which made it hopeless was the murder of Cæsar by the passionate partisans of the senatorial party; that was the act which enthroned material force, as distinguished from impartial counsel, in the supreme place, as arbiter of the world; and after this the senate had no *locus standi*. Cicero had no share in the murder of Cæsar; but he cannot be acquitted of condoning the murder after it had taken place. It was one of the faults of a man of singular worth.

As to Cæsar, the extraordinary force of his character needs no demonstration. We must not say that the restoration of the old Roman republic was in his day an absolute impossibility; but, practically speaking, it was a task beyond human power. What Cæsar gave the Romans was four centuries and a half of comparative peace; not wholly without turbulent episodes; but still a period during which mankind might reflect on the deepest problems of life and human nature, and during which incontestably very deep thoughts did come into collision, and out of which issued, not indeed immediate peace and order (far from it!) but the beginning of a new world. That Cæsar was an inspiring force cannot be said; his task was to build that protective structure of which I spoke at the beginning of this chapter; and he performed that task with great ability.

Meanwhile, though the peculiar virtue of republican Rome had died, much still remained that was admirable in the moral region. Who can forget, or fail to honour, the great soul of Virgil? He was not, it is true, a political force, like Cicero; he accepted the empire; but all that was possible of honourable life under the empire received from him sympathy and praise. Religion was to him a great and worthy mystery; he accepted that Pythagorean or Platonic form of it which told how erring souls are purged and renovated after death, and return to mortal bodies upon earth

for a new trial. To him, the whole visible world was steeped in a divinity that was its natural essence; yet in equal measure he bore in mind that the Divine Power streams into men from an outside source; the Gods were to him no mere abstraction. The beautiful life of the country, with its overflowing sources of strength and happiness, was dear to his heart; and with a sublime humility, he honoured that deeper science which he could not appropriate by his own intellect. History was to him a revelation; and by a not dishonourable mistake, he thought that the imperial power of Rome was itself the magic spell which should call into life a reign of everlasting peace over the whole earth.

Virgil and Cicero were the two greatest Roman writers (Italian rather let me say); and not only the greatest, but also the two most animated by a feeling of hope, the two most capable of generating a freedom of the spirit, when civic freedom had been lost. But under that mighty protective ægis which Cæsar had stretched over all the nations of the western world, it was not Italians alone who contended for spiritual supremacy; from Egypt, from Palestine, from Asia Minor, from Babylon and Persia, the throng of missionaries came, representatives of many ancient religions. The issue of that struggle—a greater struggle than that waged by material warfare—cannot be told in the present chapter; it must suffice here to enumerate the spiritual forces which Italy sent into the field; which, though distinguished rather by variety than by any skill of organisation, were not despicable. When I speak of the spiritual forces which Italy sent into the field, it must be understood that the spirit of Greek philosophy had thoroughly permeated Italy, long before the Roman empire was established on a secure basis; and though the Greeks continued to be less strong but more subtle than the Italians, yet in the theories of life very little difference existed between the two nations. If Virgil and Cicero were the two greatest Italian writers, the Stoics were the most powerful philosophers during the two centuries before, and the two centuries after, the Christian era; and the religion which they brought with them was one of singular dignity. In so far as they fell short of perfect truth, it was rather because the true transcendentalism had not dawned upon their view, than from any failure of theirs in the ethical field. Their philosophy is well worth understanding, and as no one known to me has so well explained it as Ferrier (of whom I spoke in my preface) it will be proper to quote here two passages from his exposition. The first is a general characterisation of the ethics of Stoicism:



The germ of the Stoical morality seems to lie in some such proposition as this: All good, all happiness, all virtue, consists in a conformity to law, just as all evil, all misery, all vice, consists in lawlessness, in a repudiation or violation or defiance of law. Submission to law, acquiescence in the established order of the universe, this seems to be the principle, and indeed the sum and substance, of their moral code. That being, I think, the general root of their system, we have now to consider the details into which it branches. And I ask what is the law, a conformity with which is equivalent to good, is equivalent to happiness, is equivalent to virtue? The answer, so far as man is concerned, seems to be this: To be virtuous and happy, man must conform *first* to the law of his own nature; *secondly*, he must conform to the law by which society is held together; *thirdly*, he must conform to the law of Providence. A life in conformity with these three laws, or rather three classes of laws, is, and must be, a life of virtue and happiness. But here it has to be asked, By means of what principle is man to find out these laws? how is he to discover what they are, and what they enjoin? By what principle is he to know when he is obeying the laws of his own nature, and when he is violating them? By what principle is he to know when he is obeying the laws of society, and when he is violating them? By what principle is he to know when he is obeying the laws of God, and when he is violating them? He is enabled to know this, the Stoics say, by the principle of reason, so that their general ethical doctrine, stated more explicitly, amounts to this, "Man is happy and virtuous in proportion to the degree in which, under the guidance and enlightenment of reason and knowledge, he conforms or accommodates himself, *first*, to the law of his own nature; *secondly*, to the law of society; *thirdly*, to the law of Providence." *Lectures and Philosophical Remains of James Frederick Ferrier*, vol. I. pp. 422-3.

It will be seen that by "reason" is here intended spiritual vision; and a good many questions might be asked as to the meaning, and as to the trustworthiness, of this spiritual vision; and also as to the meaning of the three laws laid down in the above extract as fundamental. The true law of one's own nature, of society, or of God, is not always that which on a first view usurps the name; the governing element may lie below the surface. Allowing these difficulties, which were not fully met by the Stoic philosophers, there is much truth in the above mapping out of the lines of duty; the leading parts of it are given with a broad correctness. The scheme, too, may be justly considered religious as well as ethical; the religious sphere is truly entered on; though when, leaving the general conception of God, or the Gods, we ask how the Divine Presence is made known to us, and how it affects our whole being here or hereafter, the defect of the Stoics appears. They were too much afraid of the doubt which surrounds these questions to be able to grasp them strongly, and win conclusive answers. Hence they failed when confronted with the chaos of human passions. They trusted too much to the power of the

human spirit. The truth which they missed was this; that the everlasting love, which is itself an incorruptible passion, and which is nourished by God, and which continually wins more and more souls to itself, is the only power capable of bringing harmony into the multiform impulses of men.

The blessed fire of eternal passionate love was wanting to the Stoics; but it is an unjust accusation against them to say that they were, in the ordinary sense of the word, apathetic. In defence of them against such a charge, the second passage from Ferrier, to which I referred above, may be quoted. Ferrier writes thus:

In considering this third paradox of the Stoics, which represents a passionless or apathetic condition as the highest virtue of the soul, we must remember that their apathy did not consist in insensibility, or in a deadness of feeling; it did not consist in an extinction or eradication of the passions. On the contrary, in the character of their virtuous man they included rational desire and aversion; they included love and parental affection, friendship, and a general charity and benevolence to all mankind; they considered it as a duty arising out of our very nature not to neglect the welfare of public society, but to be ever ready, according to our station or capacity, to act either the magistrate or the private citizen. Their apathy was no more than a freedom from perturbations, from irrational and excessive agitations of the soul; it was an antagonism put forth against the passions, not with a view of extinguishing them, but merely of preventing them from running into excess; and consequently that paradoxical apathy commonly laid to their charge, and in the demolishing of which so many imaginary triumphs have been achieved, was an imaginary apathy for which they were in no way accountable. *Lectures and Philosophical Remains of James Frederick Ferrier*, vol. I. pp. 434-5.

It was Panætius, the friend of the younger Scipio, who first made the Romans acquainted with Stoicism; but to us moderns the most famous names connected with this philosophy occur in the centuries after the Christian era. The emperor Marcus Aurelius has had great recognition of late; and indeed few writers have put sound precepts more tersely. But was he more worthy of honour than the slave Epictetus ("poor and lame, but beloved by the Gods"); or than Seneca, who alone among the Romans protested against the deadly gladiatorial combats, on the ground of the sacredness of humanity; or than the pure-minded Persius (dying too young) who reproved the souls bowed down to earth and careless of heavenly things? Juvenal can hardly be claimed by the Stoics; yet in the vigorous close of his tenth Satire, there are touches of piety which have some kinship with Stoicism.

Can the Epicureans be regarded as a spiritual force? Yes, we



must say so, in some degree; the quality of attraction cannot be denied to the enthusiastic Lucretius, the tenderly humorous Horace. It is unjust to think of Epicurus and his followers as men devoted to luxury. The reverse is the case; they upheld, and in the main followed, a simple life. They were numerous in the Roman world: a tranquil sociableness was their characteristic; and some honour must be given to such a temperament. Yet their force was not equal to that of Stoicism; they did not recognise how much labour is necessary for the reformation of men individually, and of the world<sup>1</sup>.

As to the great historians, Livy and Tacitus, they were rather a light than a force; but a light is, in some degree, a force; and when the influences that centred in imperial Rome are being reckoned up, their names must not be omitted.

In this chapter I have brought the narrative down to the very verge of that outburst of religious life from which our modern world, with its wide-reaching and multiform activities, has sprung: in my next chapter I must go back again to the dimly discerned origins of history.

<sup>1</sup> An appreciative study of Epicurus and his followers will be found in *Epicureanism*, by William Wallace, M.A.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FIRST SEED OF A PERFECT FAITH: ABRAHAM AND MOSES

THE great religions whose history I have briefly sketched in the seven foregoing chapters deserve serious attention from us. They were efforts after right morality and just insight; there can be no doubt that they benefited the nations which embraced them; with all their errors, they are not to be styled in merely condemnatory fashion, "false religions." Still, the aspiration which hit the true mark, the faith which has shown itself capable of throwing off errors, and expanding with a new beneficence after each liberation from error, thereby winning for itself an eternal progress, has not so far been described in the present work. I come to it now; and the first historical character in whom it appears is that ancient hero and patriarch whom we name Abraham.

But in mentioning Abraham, I come to the Bible; and it is impossible to treat of the Bible, or of Biblical history, without in the first instance letting it be clearly seen what one holds to be the real authority of the Bible in ethics and in regard to historical facts, especially in the miraculous narratives. The main purport of what I shall say on these points must justify itself by the explanation of history which it affords; but some probability should be seen to belong to it from the outset.

Four hundred years ago, it was the universal opinion of Christians that the moral teaching of the Bible was unerring, and the Biblical narratives true, without exception or qualification. Such an opinion at the present day is rare; nor can it be justified. It is true that the Biblical morality contains very valuable elements even from the first, and it is in many respects an indispensable guide to us; but we find in it the errors, partly of a rude race, but still more of a religion which had not been able to deliver itself from formalism, and in which the grounds of judgment are often hard and technical, and cruel conduct meets with approbation. Who, for instance, can defend the command which Samuel



(supposed to be acting by divine inspiration) gave to Saul, to go and destroy an entire community of the Amalekites, men, women, and children, on the ground that the ancestors of these Amalekites, some hundred years before, had attacked the Israelites immediately after their exodus from Egypt? Even in the original conflict the Amalekites, according to the record, were defeated; but apart from that, the Bible, in its better and purer portions, declares that the sons shall not be punished for the wrong-doing of their fathers; and so we all hold now. Similarly there are<sup>1</sup> cruel and perfidious acts of David which pass entirely without censure in the Bible, and are not held to derogate from his title to be called a man after God's own heart, who, it is said<sup>2</sup>, "did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and turned not aside from anything he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." So likewise the act of Ezra, which is assumed in the Bible to be the carrying out of a divine obligation, in making the Jews put away all wives who were born of a foreign race—and not only the wives, but the children of those wives—is not to be morally justified. I need not multiply instances; it is plain that there are moral defects in the Bible; whatever the merits of the Biblical teaching (and they are real), we must keep our moral judgment awake when we read it.

In view of this, we shall be prepared to find that the historical records of the Bible are not always exact. It is little more than half a century since the conflict was waged among religious persons in England as to the literal truth of the first chapter of Genesis. That chapter, noble in its spiritual tone, is now justly considered on its material side to be of the nature of a parable; it does not describe sequences of actual fact. The discoveries of geology made this clear; and the discoveries of geology presently made it also clear that the race of man had existed on earth long before the time which the Bible assigned to Adam and Eve. Hence the second and third chapters of Genesis, as well as the first, must be held to be, in so far as they really deserve our acceptance, symbolic truth and not actual history. I think there is some true instinct in the second and third chapters, as also there is a true instinct pervading the first chapter, but such instinct is not the instinct of the historian; and when it is granted that these chapters are not literal truth, we see that the writer of them did not draw any broad line between a

<sup>1</sup> See for instance, 1 Samuel xxvii. 7-12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings xv. 5.

fabulous narrative with some underlying truth involved in it, and real history. Is it possible that we should not regard a good deal in the subsequent chapters of Genesis, after the first three, as composed rather with a view to edification, than as warranted by actual evidence? Few more impossible narratives than that of the flood have ever been conceived; and the tower of Babel is a scarcely less evident fiction. We are not in the region of history here. Even if some grains of real fact are contained in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, they are not, until we come to the very end of the eleventh chapter, extricable from the rest. But at the end of the eleventh chapter we come to Abraham; and in Abraham we have, I believe, a real historical character.

Before however treating of Abraham, it is necessary to speak of one feature, very common throughout the whole Biblical history, on which a judgment must be formed initially: I mean the miraculous element in the Bible generally. A full discussion of the question of miracles cannot indeed be entered upon in this place, but must wait till I come to the New Testament history; for the New Testament miracles are supported by evidence much more nearly contemporary than is the case with those of the Old Testament; and the main discussion of this question will properly be placed in that part where the evidence is the strongest; still I must say something about it here.

It may be thought that I have already spoken of the miraculous element in the Bible in relation to the first eleven chapters of Genesis; but the marvellous tales in those chapters are not exactly miracles in the same sense in which the plagues of Egypt and the passage of the Red Sea by the Israelites are miracles; they are not insisted on as important because of their marvellousness. The early history of every nation is apt to contain extraordinary and impossible stories, devised for the sake of the pleasure given by the exercise of the imagination; such stories are called legends; and the word legend may very properly be applied to the stories of the flood and of the tower of Babel, and also to some later parts of the book of Genesis; for instance to the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the colloquies of Abraham with Divine Beings before that destruction; and also to some part of the history of Joseph. But it is not, in any of these legends, asserted or implied that the things done by God were done specifically for the purpose of giving evidence of God's existence and power, and evidence that should be handed down to all future generations. Now this is the affirmation most pointedly made in the Bible



respecting the whole series of miracles in the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, and in their desert wanderings; and it is also made as clearly, though not with such stress and frequency of affirmation, respecting the miracle of Elijah in calling down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel; and we must suppose it implied in the miracles of Joshua, and also in those narrated in the book of Daniel.

It seems, at first sight, as if we were compelled to choose one of two alternatives; either the acceptance practically of these miracles, or at any rate of the greater part of them, or the rejection, not only of the miracles, but of the doctrines which they are brought forward to prove; that is, the existence and power of God, his special care and providence exercised towards the people of Israel, and in the final result his care and providence exercised towards all the peoples of the world. These very important doctrines have in all ages been accepted by Christians; and though the doctrine of God's providence is not peculiar to either the religion of Israel or to Christianity, still a belief in the miracles of the Old Testament has been very closely entwined with the grounds on which Christian preachers have inculcated the doctrine of God's providential care for mankind; and if we think the narratives of those miracles mistaken (as certainly I do think them mistaken), the question necessarily follows, whether the doctrines which have been so habitually associated with them are not mistaken likewise; and especially whether the belief that God had any peculiar relation towards the people of Israel ought not to be discarded.

Those, however, who remember how intricately truth and error are apt to be intertwined in the thoughts of men, will be aware of the possibility that the apparent premiss put forward as the ground on which we should believe in God's providence (whether on behalf of Israel or for mankind at large) is not the true premiss. The psalmists and prophets of Israel, however much they may have appealed to miracles as a ground for their faith in God (but indeed these appeals are much less common in the prophets than in the psalmists), had a deeper ground in their own consciousness; and to this ground another may have been added in the history of their race, a history which was wonderful even if not miraculous. This, indeed, I believe to be the true account of the matter. In the very remarkable Israelite history, the wonder was, to the popular mind, externalised; a divine power had really carried Israel through many dangers, but not a power manifested in the slaughter of enemies or in the dividing of the sea; a power,

rather, which strengthened the great men of the nation inwardly, and enabled them to strengthen their fellows, and to survive the sufferings of a hard slavery first, and of a journey afterwards through a parched and barren wilderness, and lastly to overcome the hostile resistance of the tribes of Palestine among whom they settled, and whom they conquered—with much slaughter no doubt but still with a certain amount of peaceful assimilation to themselves.

It may be asked, indeed, whether in thus interpreting the history we are not going contrary to the evidence. But when the evidence is weighed, this is, I think, not so. The recorded miracles of the Exodus are confessed to have produced no effect at all on the religious disposition of the vast majority of those who are said to have witnessed them. The mass of the Israelites had not, for many generations, the smallest objection to worshipping idols, or to worshipping deities other than Jehovah<sup>1</sup>. Pure monotheism was for a long time confined to a small minority of the nation; an ardent minority no doubt, who did in the end make their belief prevail; but it was long before the Israelites at large shared it. Abraham began, and Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, all inherited the monotheistic tradition; so did Samuel, and Samuel's great protégé, David; so, at first, did Solomon; but Solomon, through motives of policy, and influenced by his wives, fell off into the ordinary polytheism. The kings of Judah after Solomon, desperately weakened though they were by the revolt of the ten tribes, did on the whole adhere to monotheism, but Manasseh wholly abandoned it, and during his long reign the cause of monotheism seemed utterly lost. But when he died, the worshippers of Jehovah took heart, and made their great, and in the end successful, stroke. They had long believed in the miracles of the Exodus; their experience did not suggest to them any doubt on the subject, insufficient though the evidence was; and they (or no doubt one among them) wrote a book which was the first form of our book of Deuteronomy; the purpose of which book was to enforce the reality of those miracles, and the lessons drawn from them. That this was the book said, in 2 Kings xxii, to have been discovered by Hilkiah the priest in the temple in the reign of Josiah, is shown by the nature of its contents; for the obligation is in it imposed on the nation to have only one sacrificial shrine, an obligation never thought of before the reign

<sup>1</sup> With respect to the name Jehovah, which would be more accurately written Yahweh, see the appendix to the present chapter.



of Hezekiah, but very naturally conceived by the priesthood at Jerusalem, and a very natural support to the worship of Jehovah alone, which was the desire (and the just desire) of the most ardent members of the Jerusalem priesthood. That the composition of the book of Deuteronomy was an untruthful act never entered the head of the writer of it, or of those who sanctioned the writing of it; history was in that age hardly distinguished from poetry; and the impassioned exhortations of the book of Deuteronomy, its promises and its threatenings, began from that moment to sink into the minds of the people of Judah. Hence came the religious legislation of Josiah; but it took more than a hundred years after Josiah's time, and the bitter suffering of the Babylonian captivity, to bring over the mass of the Jewish people to a religion of pure monotheism. It was a work which on the whole was right, and rightly done; but we must be prepared to find that not everything was right in the accomplishment of it; and the composition of the book of Deuteronomy was a work that could not at the present day be done with a pure conscience. In those days it was different; the conscience of men, in these matters of literature, was still uninformed.

If, in spite of the above remarks, it be still asked, whether it be not simpler to accept the book of Deuteronomy as what it professes to be, namely the composition of Moses himself, or at any rate a genuine record of his discourses to the Israelites, it must be answered, first, that, if the elaborate commands of the book of Deuteronomy had really been made by Moses and preserved from age to age with sedulous care, it is incredible that the command contained in the thirteenth verse of the twelfth chapter of Deuteronomy (and implied all through that chapter) should have remained entirely unknown until the reign of Josiah. I say, entirely unknown; for though the doctrine that in all Israel there must be only one sacrificial shrine was acted upon by Hezekiah, nearly a century before Josiah's time, it is nowhere said that he so acted in obedience to a specific written command. Hezekiah put down the country shrines, because it was impossible to keep idolatry, and the worship of alien deities, out of them; and this was Josiah's motive too, though in Josiah's time the authority of the book of Deuteronomy was brought in to support the genuine reason. If the book of Deuteronomy had been known by the great judge Samuel, by the great kings David and Solomon, and by the reforming kings Asa and Jehoshaphat, how are we to account for their entire ignoring of it in this particular; for the high

places (i.e. the sacrificial shrines scattered over the country) went on all through the times of those distinguished persons<sup>1</sup>?

Besides this point of the single sanctuary, the careful reader of the book of Deuteronomy will observe that that book (chapter xvii. 14–20) gives instructions as to the choice of a king over the Israelites in the times to come and as to his conduct when chosen: how came it that when the Israelites asked of Samuel in his old age to make them a king (a request with which he did in fact comply), he made no reference to this most pertinent passage of Deuteronomy, but used words which were really inconsistent with his knowing it, and in particular told the Israelites that their request was a sin? If Samuel knew the book of Deuteronomy, he was bound to refer to this passage of it, so important for the issue which the Israelites had raised. If Samuel did not know of the book of Deuteronomy (and we must infer from his silence that he did not), where was it in his time?

It is also noticeable that the account of the relations of the Israelites and Edomites, given in Deuteronomy ii. 1–8 and 28, 29, is quite different from, and inconsistent with, the account of those relations as given in Numbers xx. 14–21.

It is then not at all a simple account of the matter to say that the book of Deuteronomy contains a true account of the discourses of Moses to the Israelites; and it is further to be observed that when in 2 Kings xxii. the book of the law is said to have been found, that most important question, how the book came into being, and what had happened to it before it was found, is not in the least raised in the narrative; a question quite essential, if the book was to be regarded as a genuine statement of the law given by Moses. Further, if we are to take the book of Deuteronomy as a true record, we must believe that Moses commanded that the whole book, at any rate down to the end of the twenty-sixth chapter, should be written upon the stones of an altar on mount Ebal, to be dedicated after the Israelites had crossed over the Jordan into Palestine (Deuteronomy xxvii. 2–8); a command which the book of Joshua (viii. 30–32) affirms to have been really carried out. How important an act, if true! But can one believe it, when not a single mention of the writing thus engraved upon stones is found in all the subsequent books of the Old Testament?

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Samuel vii. 9, x. 8, xi. 15, xvi. 5; 1 Kings iii. 3, 4, xv. 11–14, xxii. 43–46. The very curious narrative in Joshua xxii. ought not to be left unmentioned in relation to this question of the obligation on the Israelites to have only one sacrificial shrine. It is a palpably fictitious narrative, invented to illustrate the command in Deuteronomy xii. 13. Had it been a true narrative, the conduct of Samuel (not to speak of other persons) would be altogether inexplicable.



The conclusion, then, to be drawn from the facts just mentioned is that the book of Deuteronomy, not precisely as it stands but in some primitive form of it, was written not very long before the period at which it is said to have been discovered, that is, not very long before the eighteenth year of the reign of king Josiah. And now observe what follows. The book of Deuteronomy is by far the greatest support of miracle in the whole of the Old Testament; the most serious argumentative support, that is; for though every miraculous narrative is in some degree or other a support of miracle, the proneness of the human mind towards marvels is so well known, especially among races at so rudimentary a stage of development as the Israelites when they conquered Canaan, that we should naturally explain the miracles of the books of Exodus and Numbers as ancient legends—legends with a background of truth no doubt, but not literal realities. It is the book of Deuteronomy which stands in the way of this conclusion—which insists that the miracles of the Exodus and of Mount Sinai are literal truths, designed by God himself for the instruction of the Israelites first, of all mankind afterwards. If however the book of Deuteronomy was written six centuries after the Exodus, can the argument contained in it stand? Evidently not; the testimony in it, strong if Moses be supposed to be the true author of it, becomes weak when we see that it was written long after his date.

That the general tenor of the history goes to support this view, I think will appear; and not least through the unfavourable moral results which came through the belief in miracles. But it is impossible to discuss, in a work like the present, every piece of testimony that could be brought forward in favour of miracles. When I come to speak of the particular books in which miracles are related or referred to, something will be said about each of those books in turn, with the view of showing in what way we ought to regard them; but as preliminary to the whole subject, the above discussion must suffice.

A brief reference to the miraculous element in the New Testament cannot however be quite dispensed with here, though it cannot as yet be discussed in its entirety. The history must be taken in order; and the Old Testament must be treated in the first place on its own basis. Yet I may say that the New Testament has never been out of my thoughts; and I am not aware of anything therein contained which ought to modify what I have just said respecting the Old Testament.

That when the miraculous element is taken away, the divine element remains; that the Old Testament history is a great and worthy one; these are the points now to be made clear. The chief other correction of the traditional views which will appear in the following sketch (in the present and succeeding chapters) lies in the later date which will be assigned to some of the books; especially to most of the psalms, to parts of the book of Isaiah, and to the book of Daniel. But I must reserve the subject of these books till I come to them in the natural course of the history. Of the date of composition of the Pentateuch generally I cannot here speak with any detail; the final construction of it can hardly have been earlier than the return from the Babylonian captivity; but some of the separate narratives in it must have been very much earlier.

To Abraham I now return; and in him we do touch solid ground. It is true that his history cannot have been committed to writing for centuries after his death; for though writing was used in his age, it was used by comparatively few, and those few were not nomads, as Abraham was. Had writing been used by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the fact could not have escaped mention. But the agreements made by these patriarchs are never written agreements, though they certainly would have been so if writing had been a habitual means of communication with them (see Genesis xxiii. 16-18, xxvi. 28-31, xxxi. 44, 45); and Joseph, in sending a message to his father (xlv. 13, 27) makes no use of writing. Yet this characteristic of the book of Genesis is rather a favourable sign as regards the general truthfulness of the accounts of these patriarchs (though not as regards their detailed accuracy); the age is so far correctly represented. It is natural that writing among the Israelites should have taken its start in Egypt, probably with Moses himself: this is what we should infer from the Bible (Exodus xvii. 14, and compare 1 Samuel xv. 2; Exodus xxiv. 4). The style of it was no doubt rude, and long written narratives cannot have been possible till a much more settled time.

Our evidence then is imperfect. Yet oral testimony is not valueless; and in the chief points of Abraham's character and history there is an explanatory force, which ought to convince us of their truth. This is so, whether we regard Abraham in his relation to antecedent times, as the purifier of a worship that had become coarse and sensual; or in his relation to the after history, as the first man in whose soul the far future was definitely imaged



as clothed with an ideal hope and aim. It is not to be supposed that all the clan which followed Abraham appropriated or understood Abraham's highest thoughts, or even that they could understand a worship of God from which all idolatry was severely removed. Such purity of religious temper was not speedily to be attained by a large number of men. But the belief in a Divine Power, to whom man is bound by ties of loyal reverence and affection, and who cherishes the faithful man and sends vigour into his children and into his children's children for all generations, this belief was handed down by Abraham to after times; it was the animating force of his chief descendants, and slowly permeated an entire nation, stimulating them towards virtue; though it is true that it was afterwards subject to narrowing influences, through the imperfection which belongs to all formulated ideals.

But in Abraham himself there was no narrowness. The preeminence which he believed to be reserved by the Divine Will for his descendants did not make him discourteous or unfriendly to the nations among whom he moved. He traversed the land with his clan of a thousand persons or more; but much larger and more settled tribes lay round about him; a peaceful temper was necessary for his preservation. But indeed his far-seeing hope made him peaceful; he did not desire his own aggrandisement. His soul rested in a communing with God; for this he had left his home in Chaldea, and the idolatrous religion which he himself in his early years had practised; it was on the future, not the present, that his thoughts were bent. Under what name did he think of God? Probably under the somewhat vague plural form "Elohim," "the Divine Powers," and not under the name "Jehovah"; the book of Exodus seems more right here than the book of Genesis; though the question is not quite an easy one; but on the whole it does seem to have been Moses, and not the elder patriarchs, who first emphasised and laid stress on the name "Jehovah."

The religion of Abraham, though ardent, was less definite than that of his warlike successor Moses; but wholly indefinite it was not. If the divinest of Abraham's instincts was that in which he heard God saying to him, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," he received a more definite forecast of the future in the words, "Unto thy seed will I give the land of Canaan." These are the two promises which God is held to have made to Abraham; but we cannot look upon them as equally divine. They represent two differing ideals, the one

higher and the other lower ; the higher and the lower intermingling with each other as they are wont to do in all the thoughts of men. We may trace them in the subsequent history, each ideal pursuing its separate course. The earthly ideal rose into prominence through Moses, and culminated in David and Solomon ; but then was shattered from within and gradually swept away ; and though as long as Israelites or Jews are a force in the world, it is not impossible that they may re-unite and dwell in the land of Palestine (or Canaan), this if accomplished would be but a very subordinate result amid the expanding destinies of mankind. It was in the heavenly ideal of Abraham that the vital hope of the future lay ; and this began to germinate and expand exactly when the earthly ideal was beginning to vanish. As the kingdoms of Israel and Judah sank, the prophets of Israel and Judah arose ; and the prophetic burden was, that from their nation, the nation chosen of God, should proceed the reign of justice and mercy over all the earth. And that ideal can never vanish.

Those who note how this double development was fulfilled in the history of Israel, who note also how unconscious the Israelites always were that it was a double development, proceeding in two directions, and who then note how the two branches of the development are both clearly involved in the mind and thoughts of Abraham, as that is recorded in the book of Genesis, will see in this fact a decisive vindication of the historical reality of Abraham. The history of Israel, which so remarkably needs explanation, is explained by the character of Abraham ; and there is no other explanation of it.

Let me come to the details. That Abraham truly came out of the land of the Chaldees, and truly made the land of Canaan his home afterwards, living more or less a nomad life, we may safely believe, for this is the key to the subsequent history. That his religious feeling, and his habitual sense of the presence of a Divine Helper with whom he held intercourse, led him to adopt the rite of circumcision, is probably true ; for religious feeling naturally shows itself in external signs. Circumcision was a symbol of self-sacrifice, and the need of self-sacrifice was deeply implanted in Abraham ; it is likely too that he would welcome such a symbol as distinguishing himself and his clan from the idolaters around him. That considerations of health had weight with him in practising this rite, is not likely ; his ordinary life favoured health, and the same would be true of those who were his subordinates ; the searchings of his spirit were in another



direction, namely how to render his life approved to the Being to whom the allegiance of his heart was given.

When we read of the intercourse between God and Abraham, of God speaking and Abraham replying, we must not think (in spite of the form of the words) of verbal speech, but rather of such intercourse as God has with men now; of the uplifted and recipient heart, and of the impression made on the suppliant as he tries with God's help to determine the lines of duty. When we look at the matter in this way, we shall see that the divine communications would not have that sharpness of outline and unmistakable clearness of meaning which the ordinary reader of the Bible thinks is implied in the Biblical narrative; rather they would be shadowings and indications of truth, broad in their general effect, but liable to be misconceived in their application to details. This is indeed a consideration which we need to bear in mind all through the Old Testament; the historians give a preciseness of form to the divine commands (and indeed to the history generally) which the information at their command did not really justify.

There are naturally many things in the history of Abraham as related in the book of Genesis which are of a legendary rather than of a historical character; and among these may be particularly mentioned the ancestral relation which he and his nephew Lot are said to have had towards so many of the surrounding peoples—Ishmaelites, Midianites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites; perhaps even the Amalekites; but the affiliation of the Midianites and Amalekites is not so distinctly affirmed as in the case of the other races. That the Moabites and Ammonites and Edomites (the last named especially) were races kindred with the Israelites is implied through all the history, and is no doubt true.

The history of Abraham's wanderings, whether in Palestine or in Egypt, does no doubt rest upon a basis of truth; and it is probable also that he had a nephew Lot, and a son Ishmael, as the Bible relates. That Isaac was his son and heir, has a stronger degree of probability; and I say this especially because of the famous narrative of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of his son Isaac, which in the end was not actually carried out. I cannot but think that this narrative rests on a true basis; and that the act attributed to Abraham is one in which true religion and superstition are apt to be mistaken for one another (as they have so often been mistaken in history afterwards); an act in which

a motive, up to a certain point good and right, is made subservient to wrong and injurious action. In Abraham's case, happily, the injurious action was not accomplished.

That Abraham was a great and ruling spirit, is apparent even from what I have already said; but it does not follow from this that he was incapable of error; and his profoundest thoughts were those in which he was most likely to be led astray, owing to the obscurity of the subjects involved. He saw, as we all see, the vast depth at which mankind lie below an ideal perfection; the sin and misery of the world were plain to him; he could not hope that any man would altogether escape the touch of this untoward condition. He felt, what one of the greatest of the prophets of Israel expressed in words many centuries afterwards: "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Abraham could not write, and could not therefore transmit any such testimony respecting himself and his contemporaries to posterity; but the act of which I am now speaking, the attempted sacrifice of his son, shows that he felt it. A man so great as he could not but endeavour to solve the deep problem of human duty in a more comprehensive manner than others; "If I am to bring to an end these deep ills of humanity, what does God require of me in the way of action?" he asked himself.

Stories of those ancient times (though not of quite such remote antiquity as Abraham) tell us of wild chieftains who for some deeply desired end consented to sacrifice their children, thinking that the divine favour was to be won thereby. Such, in Israelite history, was Jephthah; such, in Greek history, was Agamemnon. Whatever we may think of these two heroic figures, there can be no doubt that such deeds were done; done with tears and sighing, it is more than likely; but then it was the tears and sighing which proved the value of the sacrifice. It was not for any such specific end as that for which the vow of Jephthah was made, or for which Agamemnon allowed his daughter to be slain, that Abraham can be conceived to have taken his son Isaac to a distant mountain, in order there to offer him as a sacrifice to God. It was no private advantage that he desired; but he must have been profoundly convinced that something ought to be offered up to God, in order to put man and God on terms of abiding intercourse; and whether from the example of others or from his own suggestion, he determined that his son was the victim demanded. His general thought, that man must render his whole heartfelt service to God, was true; his particular application of it was not true.



Had he slain his son, he would have committed a sin. But to go up to the verge of slaying his son was different from performing the actual deed; the obscurity of his moral position did not permit him to discern at once the error of the act contemplated; and as long as he believed it to be right, faithfulness demanded that he should carry it out. Then, at the last moment, when he had prepared everything for the deed, and was about to perform it, the obscuring film dropped from the eyes of his spirit. The consciousness of present rectitude was in him; and yet he was stayed in his course. The divine blessing was granted him; yet he returned home with his son intact. He sacrificed, the Bible tells us (and very likely truly) a ram in place of his son.

If the above account be substantially true (and in speaking of it as true, I am far from implying that we can enter into the great strain and trial endured by Abraham, or that we can appropriate to ourselves his full mind)—but if it be true as regards the main current of his thoughts, then we must think of him as one who had not only great ideals, but also a solemn sense of obligations which are real, and yet beyond the power of man definitely to conceive; of obligations on the part of man to God, the Father of our spirits; with whose mind our minds and our actions must be in harmony, according to our measure, if we are to receive from him strength and sustenance. Abraham anticipated and prefigured a certain ordering of the consciences of men, which he could not himself definitely accomplish; but to have anticipated and prefigured it was a great thing, and the effect of this sense of spiritual duty was seen in all his race afterwards.

Of Abraham I need say no more. Of Isaac we know little that is distinctive, though we must hold him to be a real character; but the picturesqueness of the stories which relate to Jacob, and to Jacob's favourite son Joseph, strike every reader of the Bible. The element of romance in these stories is obvious; but it would be incorrect to think that there is therefore no ground of truth in them. What we learn from ancient historians, and from the monuments, renders such an event as the migration of Jacob and his sons and the whole clan into Egypt quite a possibility. Egypt had at that time been conquered, and was being governed, by the alien race of the Hyksos or Shepherd kings, who themselves had come out of Canaan. (See, as to this, Sayce's *Archæology of the Cuneiform Inscriptions*, p. 145.) One of these kings is said to have entertained Abraham (Genesis xii.); and another of the race might well entertain Abraham's great-grandson and raise

him to high authority, without any offence to his own racial feeling.

Apart from the main story, a few words must be given to the relations of Jacob to his twin brother Esau (the elder of the two). The passionate, generous character of Esau excites real interest in the reader of the Bible; and the duplicity of Jacob in deceiving his father Isaac for his own profit and against the interests of Esau excites corresponding indignation. Yet the Biblical historian does not appear to have thought that Jacob had done anything discreditable. The story as it stands is an improbable one; but if Esau is to be treated as a real person (which cannot be held quite certain) the quarrel between him and Jacob is far from improbable; and we may hope that the two brothers were reconciled afterwards, as the book of Genesis in a very affecting description tells us that they were.

The chief thread of the story of Jacob lies, however, apart from Esau. He is a great and venerable person, and the modern reader does not do him enough honour; though he is not of course equal to Abraham. Yet there are points in which he has a distinction even above Abraham. He was the first of the patriarchs to repress idolatry among his followers (see the narrative in Genesis xxxv. 2-7). He exercised a natural authority in doing so, and no resentment was occasioned by it; we must not parallel this with the acts of intolerance which have been so frequent in the world's history. In addition he, with the aid of his son Joseph, kept his sons in harmony and union together; which neither Abraham nor Isaac appears to have succeeded in doing. The beautiful story of Joseph is too well known to be recounted here; his forgiveness of his brothers after great wrongs is a fact too much inwoven into the whole course of the history to be easily distrusted. In other respects it is possible that Joseph was not altogether so blameless as the narrative represents him; and we can hardly approve of the agreement, so favourable to despotism, which he is reported to have made between the Egyptians and Pharaoh as to the land—an agreement which it would appear that the Egyptians had no choice but to accept. (Genesis xlvii. 13-27.) Yet he must have been a man of great ability and worth.

There was no principle of monogamy among these ancient patriarchs, and Jacob in particular was not a monogamist; yet the story of his love for Rachel and his fourteen years service for her sake is the most tender love story in the whole Bible. A lofty sentiment appears also in his assumption (by divine command,



we are told) of the name of Israel, whether we interpret this name as meaning "a prince of God" or "a striver with God." A chieftain he was, with a great following, as appears both from other passages, and especially from the story of the murderous slaughter which two of his sons committed on the people governed by Hamor and Shechem, an act of which Jacob himself greatly disapproved. That, in the end, he went down to Egypt with his sons and their families and with his entire clan, at the invitation of Joseph, we may believe.

Those two ideals cherished by Abraham, of which I spoke above, the earthly ideal which consisted in his descendants possessing Canaan, and the heavenly ideal which consisted in the beneficent influence of those descendants on the world at large, were cherished by Jacob also, and were handed down by him to his sons. We cannot doubt that these two ideals, and the main outlines of the lives of the eminent men in whose hearts the ideals of the future had been conceived, were preserved in the minds of the Israelite race all through the time of their sojourn in Egypt, which for the greater part of the time was a sojourn in bondage: all else was forgotten, but these things were not forgotten. This is exactly what happened in the time of the Babylonian captivity, a thousand years later; for in the Babylonian captivity also we are struck with the extraordinary disregard which the captive Jews showed as regards their contemporary history, and the tenacity with which they clung to the great names of the past. That this was the case with the Israelites in Egypt also, we cannot doubt; and it is notable and natural that they took their national name from the great ancestor who actually lived at the time of their migration into Egypt, rather than from that still greater ancestor who was the originator of the religious spirit which was their strength.

It is a great landmark of history at which I have now arrived. As there have been many critics who have denied the real existence of Abraham, so there have been some, though fewer, who have denied that the Israelites ever sojourned in Egypt; who have treated the beginnings of Israelite history as consisting merely in the entrance into Canaan of an indiscriminate and barbarous multitude, children of the desert. Those who choose to abandon all sense of historical sequence and causation may take this line; such critics certainly never have explained, and never will explain, how that complex and unique phenomenon, the religion of Israel, took its rise. Nor do I believe that it can possibly be explained

except by following, in the main, the Biblical lines; with of course that reserve as to the details which the nature of the narrative and the antiquity of the period enjoins on us.

When the monarch of Egypt, the Pharaoh of that epoch, at the request of Joseph, admitted Jacob and his family and clan as settlers in his realm, he did not venture to grant them any land in the populous parts of Egypt; but he assigned to them the land of Goshen, bordering on the desert, a tract suited to a pastoral community. There they dwelt in peace during many years; there Jacob died, and there Joseph died, and there Joseph's brethren died; and for how much longer the immigrant Israelites remained unmolested we do not know. But circumstances caused a change adverse to them.

We read in Exodus i. 7, the following description of the condition of things before that change occurred:

And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that when the "children of Israel" are spoken of at the time of their entrance into Egypt, there are intended not merely the threescore and ten persons joined together by actual blood-relationship, enumerated in Genesis xlv. 8-27, but also the clan of followers and subordinates, numbering doubtless a thousand or more, who had embraced, as already mentioned, the religious belief of their chiefs. Though therefore the increase of the Israelites in Egypt, whereby from a clan they became a nation, was certainly remarkable, it was not miraculous. But to their actual numbers at the time of the Exodus, and to the causes which swelled those numbers, I must advert presently.

The land, says the book of Exodus, was filled with them. That is to say, they had increased so much that they were obliged to go out of the land of Goshen, which had been assigned to them, and to make homes for themselves throughout the whole extent of Egypt and its cities. We may conceive how unpopular this made them. The Egyptians would not eat with them (Genesis xliii. 32), nor, as we must suppose, have any friendly association with them; yet here were the Israelites in their midst, and in such near vicinity that intimate intercourse would under ordinary circumstances have been unavoidable. The Israelites, never liked from the first moment of their sojourn, came to be hated; and at



last events took a turn which enabled this hatred to express itself and make itself felt.

The Hyksos or Shepherd kings, after five centuries of domination, were expelled by the Egyptians; and a native dynasty, one of the most powerful that ever reigned in Egypt, took their place. To the Israelites, the departure of their protectors meant the exchange of liberty for slavery. This at any rate was true of those who were scattered over the face of the country; but it is quite clear from the narrative that there were Israelites not in a state of slavery, and it is reasonable to believe that these were those who had remained in Goshen, the land originally assigned to them. But by far the greater number were reduced to slavery, and slavery of a peculiarly severe kind, among a people who had a strong dislike of them.

Thus began that long conflict between the race of Israel and the rest of mankind, which has continued ever since; a conflict not always acute, but of unparalleled persistence; a conflict originating in the conception that the race of Israel were to be, through the blessing of God, the supreme benefactors of mankind. This conception has indeed been singularly vindicated by history, and yet has been marred by the intermixture, in the temperament of that race, of a rigid and proud exclusiveness. But I must not in this place dwell further on a matter, the elucidating of which will need great care in the subsequent chapters of this work.

Of the details of the servitude of the Israelites in Egypt but little is told us. We learn that they built for Pharaoh two "store cities," Pithom and Raamses. From this one would infer that they were collected together in special localities; and this may not improbably have been the case. There may possibly have been an attempt on the part of the Egyptians to kill off all the males of the race, as is related in Exodus i. 15-22: but if so, it was clearly an attempt very soon abandoned. All through this hard time the leaders of the Israelites retained the sense of a great destiny reserved for them, of the promises of God, and especially of a future possession of the land of Canaan; and these beliefs would not be without influence even upon the mass of the people. There is reason to think (though the Bible does not admit this—see Joshua v. 5) that the practice of circumcision was not steadily kept up during the Egyptian bondage; at all events the strange story in Exodus iv. 24-26, appears to indicate that Moses did not originally circumcise his own children; and if Moses was remiss, who may not have been remiss?

The name of Moses brings us to the era of the deliverance. How are we to think of that famous event? Under what impulse, through what power, did the Israelites make their escape from Egypt; and did they achieve freedom through God's working on their behalf?

Yes; but as I have already intimated in this chapter, not in the manner usually understood, but in a manner more noble than that of miracles. Let me show how this is.

In the most remarkable parts of the book of Exodus, as it stands, Moses has no true proper personal agency at all. He has personal agency, indeed, in killing the Egyptian taskmaster; in fleeing to the land of Midian, and becoming a herdsman to Jethro, and marrying Jethro's daughter Zipporah; and, later, in his indignation when he breaks the two tables of stone, deeming the Israelites unworthy to receive God's law; lastly, also, when he pleads with God on behalf of the sinful people (Exodus xxxii. 11-13, and 31, 32). But the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, and the legislation given them, are in no respect parts of his personal agency. He receives the divine commands, he lifts up his rod, and mighty miracles happen; but he is not the doer of these miracles; he has not even by any labour of his own prepared the way for them. As far as appears, in all his intercourse with Pharaoh, he runs no personal risk; he moves about under the divine seal and protection, and sees his enemies afflicted and falling, himself being the while perfectly secure. Why should we specially honour a champion who has so easy a task? Or will the believer in the miracles say that we are not intended to honour Moses, but that we are intended to honour God? True, we are intended to honour God—remotely and mysteriously, in matters that are remote and mysterious to us; vividly and joyfully, in matters that are within the compass of our intelligence. Is not the very meaning of a revelation this, that it brings within the compass of our intelligence a Power, which in so many things is remote and mysterious? If we honour God for performing miracles like those of the Exodus, we honour him distantly and mysteriously; if we honour him because he inspired with his strength the native courage and patriotism of Moses, we honour him vividly and intelligently. Is not the latter entitled to be called a revelation rather than the former? And if God's agency in the matter lay in his inspiring with strength the native courage and patriotism of Moses, then we may honour Moses too; for we must not think that God infused his strength into Moses mechanically. The



case was quite otherwise; it was heart beating with heart; the heart of the heroic Moses with the heart of the Eternal and Almighty Spirit. That was true, intelligible revelation; not that Moses was a perfect or flawless character; but he was a heroic character, worthy of God's love and support. He did indeed accomplish a far greater visible work than Abraham did; though Abraham had the deeper original insight and feeling.

On these premisses, I maintain that it is not dispensing with revelation or annulling revelation to say that the miracles of the Exodus are not literally true; but on the contrary, that such a beginning clears the way for understanding what revelation truly is; and without such a clearing of the way we cannot proceed at all. To the actual history I now come.

That Moses was a warrior appears even from the Bible, though in the Bible this part of his action is thrown into the background as compared with his office as the spokesman of the divine will, the declarer of the divine judgments. But in the *Antiquities* of Josephus (book II. c. 10) and in the treatise *Against Apion* of the same author (book I. c. 26) the military aspect of the character of Moses is strongly brought forward; and though the latter chapter is in the main a quotation from Manetho, with whom Josephus is by no means in agreement, it none the less shows what the Egyptians thought of Moses, and this is a point of view not to be neglected. It is true that, even in Manetho, Moses is represented as primarily a lawgiver; but very curiously, he is represented as initiating a war against the Egyptians by summoning to the help of the Israelites those very Shepherd kings and their followers whom the Egyptians had driven out. Now, without placing implicit faith in Manetho, it is certainly desirable that in considering the character of Moses we should take into account the military aspects of it.

The great work of which he was the true author, the transplanting of the Israelites from Egypt into the land of Canaan (a work not completed by himself but none the less truly his), was a work that could not possibly be done without a great deal of fighting and a great deal of killing. Not wholly divine was such a work; and we must regret this part of it. But it is a case in which we have to balance good and evil; and that which makes the balance weigh on the side of good is the high intrinsic value of the people of Israel, as a factor in the world's development. Moses himself could but feel, he could not fully judge, the way in which the balance inclined; but we, more than three

thousand years later than Moses, have surer grounds of judgment.

The people of Israel, depressed as they had been through long years of servitude in Egypt, had still, especially in the persons of their leaders, much of that high sentiment and simplicity of faith which had come down to them from Abraham. In many respects they were barbarous; but the knowledge and skill in which they were inferior to Babylonians, Egyptians, and even to Canaanites, had less value for the world than that forward-looking hope which was the treasure of their hearts and their bond of union. It is true that the racial tie is not the deepest or strongest of ties; but a very deep and strong tie it is. Fervently did Moses possess it, mounting up in his thoughts to the founders of his race, and clinging to the promises of God; and if we cannot think him altogether right as to what those promises were, neither must we think him altogether wrong. The most earthly and least truly divine of what he deemed to be God's promises, the inheritance by Israel of the land of Canaan, was to Moses the rift of light which showed him his way in the darkness; and following on this track, he could not avoid bloodshedding. His feelings towards the Canaanites, against whom his action was principally directed, are in all probability more correctly represented in the books of Exodus and Numbers than in the book of Deuteronomy: he meant to drive them out; but he had no wish for their universal slaughter.

If we cannot say that Moses was in every respect a merciful man, he was at all events full of pity and love towards his own people, the Israelites. Not that he was incapable of severity towards them too; that was implied in his office as their leader and lawgiver; but his heart was bent on their deliverance and on setting them right in the way of peaceable and prosperous life.

Severe as he was, he was also ardent, vigorous, loving on their behalf; the diviner side of Abraham's ideal had taken root in his temperament, and showed itself in this way<sup>1</sup>.

But what was the exact truth as regards the wonderful event to which I have been referring, the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, their acceptance of a law esteemed by them as divine, and their conquest of Canaan? Let the reader remember how difficult it is to reconstruct with certainty a piece of ancient

<sup>1</sup> I perceive that I have, without design, given a character of Moses very similar to that given by Josephus in his work *Against Apion*, book II. chapters 16, 17. In that treatise Josephus says nothing about the miracles of the Exodus; and though he narrates them in his *Antiquities*, I cannot but doubt whether he really believed in them.



history, which has reached us almost entirely in poetic and legendary form. Yet the attempt at reconstruction must to a certain extent be made; for the history is in this part of vital importance; and something, though not everything, may be determinable respecting it. Manetho, though he has considerable defects, may yet help us. He was an Egyptian, and the Israelites were disliked and despised by him; but there are points in his account, as given by Josephus, which deserve our attention. Manetho knows that the Shepherd kings were a powerful dynasty and for a time conquerors of Egypt; he might even seem to identify them and their followers with the Israelites; on the whole however it would be more correct to say that he looks upon the Israelite nation as formed by a union between the followers of the Shepherd kings and a certain portion of the Egyptian nation that had been cast out as afflicted with leprosy. This union, according to him, did not take place while the Shepherd kings were ruling in Egypt, but some three or four centuries after they had been expelled; and he actually says that the Shepherd kings and their followers, on leaving Egypt, went and founded Jerusalem and built the temple there. Three or four centuries after this (as I have just said) he represents Moses as being born, whose original name, he says, was Osarsiph; and the toilsome bondage of the Israelites appears in Manetho's narrative as the bondage of some eighty thousand afflicted Egyptians, who were set to work in the quarries east of the Nile. However the king of Egypt (he says) of his own grace and favour set these captives free, and gave them a desolate city called Avaris to live in, which formerly had been inhabited by the Shepherd kings and their followers. These eighty thousand then took Osarsiph (or Moses) for their leader, who gave them new laws, very diverse from those of the Egyptians (though he himself is said at first to have been an Egyptian priest). Moses then summoned the followers of the Shepherd kings from Jerusalem, and with their aid tried to subdue Egypt; however he and his allies were defeated and driven out, and retreated to Syria, where (it is implied) they established themselves as the Israelite nation.

Manetho's account is a travesty of history; but yet he knows something. The alliance between the Shepherd kings and the Israelites is known by him, though not in its true form. The servitude of the Israelites is known by him, though inaccurately as to its length and character. Though he attributes to many of the Israelites an Egyptian origin, he knows that a considerable part of the nation was not of Egyptian origin; and this part, he

says, came from the east (*Against Apion*, i. 14). He knows that Moses was a lawgiver, and a lawgiver of remarkable originality, and that he took the lead of the whole nation; and if he represents him as originally an Egyptian, we must remember that the Bible also represents Moses as brought up among the Egyptians, and as trained in all the Egyptian learning. Finally, is not Manetho right when he represents leprosy as common among the Israelites? The book of Leviticus seems to support him; and it was a frequent statement among heathen authors.

Now comes the important point. Manetho tells us that the Israelites (represented by him as a composite nation, as I have described) engaged in actual fighting with the Egyptians. He does not say that they won their liberty by fighting, for he says that the Egyptians gave to those of them who were enslaved their liberty first, and that the Israelites fought afterwards and were beaten; but surely this is a piece of patriotic vanity in him. The natural inference from his account is that the Israelites had to fight, in some measure at any rate, in order to obtain their liberty. And is not this the most natural account of the matter? If the Bible does not say so, we must remember that the Biblical historians had the honour of Jehovah deeply at heart, and that the military glory of their own nation was quite secondary in their eyes. It was natural for the Biblical historians to slide off the actual fact in one direction, just as it was natural for Manetho to slide off the actual fact in another direction, and the Bible does represent the Egyptians and Israelites as very nearly coming to blows.

I conclude, then, that the Israelites won their liberty not without some fighting, and that Moses was their leader in this. Had they any allies? The book of Exodus (xii. 38) tells us that "a mixed multitude" went up with the Israelites out of Egypt. Who were this mixed multitude? It is possible that they were simply ordinary Egyptians of the poorest sort. But it is possible, also, that they were adherents of the Shepherd kings, who had been left behind when the Shepherd kings were expelled from Egypt, and who were disliked by the Egyptians just as the Israelites were disliked by them. If so, there would be a certain truth in the statement of Manetho that the Israelites formed an alliance with the Shepherds; though it is most improbable that they sent to Jerusalem to obtain that alliance. On the whole, looking at all the evidence, it seems to me that this was most probably the fact.



Probably the ten plagues are a tradition founded on the fact of physical calamities from which Egypt suffered at this period: the Israelites would have their best chance of escape when the Egyptians were in any way weakened. But no external opportunities, taken in themselves, can account for the deliverance of the Israelites; the genius of Moses was the true main cause of it. What power of organisation he must have had! This he would have learned when in the service of the Egyptians, in the earlier years of his life; but the fountains of his spirit sprang from no such external source. We read in the Bible how, when in full manhood, he openly espoused the cause of his oppressed fellow-countrymen; and how, having slain one of the Egyptian taskmasters who was ill-treating an Israelite, he had to fly into exile. There the fire kindled in his heart; God spoke to him; and (a new king being on the throne) he ventured to return to Egypt, and to claim liberty for his people. The persistent refusal of Pharaoh did but make his ardour keener; and the project of taking possession of Canaan would be confirmed by the discovery that freedom for the Israelites was impossible within the bounds of Egypt.

How, with the scanty information that we possess, are we to realise the stupendous event which followed? There have been many instances in the world's history of great hordes travelling over distances far longer than that which the Israelites traversed; and some of these hordes have effected conquests at the end of their travel. But apart from all the material difficulties of the case, there is something more difficult to understand about the Israelites than in the case of an ordinary barbarous horde. There certainly was a light shooting through the darkness of their barbarism; but to what extent who shall say? There was a feeling in them that they were a chosen race; but how many were really touched by this feeling? To how many, on the contrary, was everything hidden except the present danger and discomfort? How far were the vices of the slave still in them? It is hard to form an imagination of what they were; and even in the case of Moses himself, the mixture of military leader, lawgiver, and ethical instructor is hard to realise.

What are we to suppose the number of persons thus departing from Egypt? The Biblical reckoning of numbers is hardly ever trustworthy; but still, in order to account for the conquest of Canaan, we must suppose that the number of emigrants is to be reckoned by the hundred thousand. All these, while still in the land of Egypt, had to be aroused, stimulated, set in motion; and

this, until the actual start, had to be done with secrecy. This implies a certain fellow-feeling among the whole multitude, whether Israelites or not; but when they had once started, it would take no long time for them all to consider themselves Israelites.

A warlike movement, as I have said, it must be considered; and on a night when the bright full moon was shining, the blow was struck. It is not improbable that, as the Bible tells us, the Israelites smeared their doorposts with blood on that night; for Egyptian guards and Egyptian soldiers would be at hand, and to attack and slay these would be the first step. A house not smeared with blood would be recognised as Egyptian. It is possible even, as Manetho affirms (Josephus, *Against Apion*, i. 26) that towns and villages were set on fire. But in any case the servitude was loosened; the march of liberation began. If the Pharaoh of that time was absent in Ethiopia (as we gather from Manetho) the pursuit would be delayed; and when it did take place, it was too late for any effective recovery of the fugitives. The "sea of reeds," towards which Moses directed the march, was not, as is now generally acknowledged, the Red Sea, but the marshy lakes to the north. As to what took place there, it is impossible now to speak with certainty. It is by no means unlikely that some of the retreating Israelites were overtaken and slain by the army of Pharaoh in revenge; on the other hand, it is also possible that the Egyptians were entangled in the marshes and suffered serious loss there. However this may be, the Israelites and their allies (thenceforward regarded as part of the entire Israelite body) escaped, in the reign of the Pharaoh Menephthah, called by Manetho Amenophis, in the fourteenth<sup>1</sup> century before the Christian era. Egypt was behind them; the desert country was before them. What happened in that desert country?

We must believe that there the foundation was laid on which the spiritual government of a nation was afterwards reared, though not for centuries afterwards was that spiritual government completed in all its details. But before coming to that great subject, some preliminary points must be spoken of.

The Bible, as everyone knows, speaks of forty years as the time during which the Israelites sojourned in the wilderness. But the word "forty" is often used in the Bible to signify a term of indefinite length; and when we look into the details of the

<sup>1</sup> Or perhaps the thirteenth century; but the precise date must not be discussed here.



book of Numbers, we see that only three actual years of wanderings are narrated. The first year begins, of course, with the departure from Egypt; the second year begins with the passover described at the beginning of the ninth chapter of Numbers; the third year begins with the arrival of the Israelites at Kadesh (Numbers xx. 1). It is true that the third year is not explicitly mentioned in this last passage, but only the "first month"; but a comparison of Numbers xx. 1 with Deuteronomy ii. 14 proves (even if it were otherwise doubtful) that the third year is meant. Now this same twentieth chapter of Numbers carries us at once to the last year of the desert wanderings, in the twenty-third verse (for Aaron's death, which is there mentioned, happened in the fifth month of the fortieth year after the Exodus, according to Numbers xxxiii. 38). Now what was happening during the years, more than thirty-seven in number, which elapsed between the arrival of the Israelites at Kadesh and the death of Aaron? Our two authorities, Numbers and Deuteronomy, differ here very considerably; but neither authority fills up the gap in any adequate manner. The only important event which the book of Numbers mentions is a miracle, which on a particular occasion supplied the Israelites with water; but how the Israelites were supplied with water during the rest of the thirty-seven years, the book of Numbers does not say.

Now though, if we accepted the miraculous history as it stands, we should no doubt accept the forty years sojourn in the wilderness along with the other marvels without question; yet, if we do not accept the miraculous history (and I am maintaining that we cannot), the case is altered; the "forty years" cannot be maintained as of any authority; it simply shows that the Israelites felt that they had remained a very long time in the desert. But in a nation imbued with this feeling, three years may well be expanded into an indefinite large number; and then the didactic teachers of an after generation would fix this large number as forty, and would draw the moral which we see that they drew, of the penalty inflicted on those who transgressed the commands of Jehovah.

If we suppose the desert wanderings to have occupied a period of three years, we shall be within the bounds of natural possibility, all things being considered. It is probable that the deserts surrounding Palestine were not quite so barren in the days of Moses as they are at the present day. This is a point to which attention was called by Dean Stanley, in his *Sinai and Palestine*; who remarks that even of late years the vegetation has diminished,

through the destructive habits of the wild population. It is certain that the land of Edom, which borders on the Sinaitic peninsula, could not maintain to-day the population which it maintained in ancient times; and would such an invasion of Palestine be possible at the present day as that described in the following passage of the book of Judges?

And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel; and because of Midian the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and the caves, and the strongholds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east; they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come to Gaza, and left no sustenance in Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, they came in as locusts for multitude; both they and their camels were without number, and they came into the land to destroy it. And Israel was brought very low because of Midian; and the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah. Judges vi. 2-6.

It is not to be supposed that the writer of that passage had seen the event which he so graphically describes; but plainly it was not an impossible event in those days. The wild "children of the east" must have come across the desert to Palestine; and does not this go far to show that the Israelites, coming from the south, may have done the same? We cannot solve all difficulties; but the sojourn of the Israelites for three years in the desert country cannot be held to be an impossibility, quite apart from miracle. The cattle which they took with them would supply them with some means of subsistence; and it is important to notice that cattle can live in a country where men could not find any sustenance in the produce of the ground.

But in all this history of the desert wanderings, as in the history of the Exodus itself, the central part is that of Moses; and Moses, strong as a leader, is yet more admirable as a lawgiver. It is not to be supposed that any part of the elaborate Pentateuchal code proceeded from Moses, or from any one at all near to the date of Moses, except what are called the ten commandments (in the Hebrew the "ten words"); and these would be written in the briefest, probably hieroglyphic, form. The evidence seems sufficient that the ark which was in Solomon's temple really contained the tables of stone on which the "ten words" were written (see Deuteronomy x. 5, written, it must be remembered, about the reign of Josiah); and the history of the ark is very fairly traced back to the time of the judges (cf. 1 Samuel iii. 3). Earlier than that, tradition must answer for the tables of



stone; but the tradition is a probable one. I assume then that the substance of the ten commandments came from Moses; and any one who believes in God must confess that their purport is of admirable breadth and sanity, and especially suited to a primitive race. To us, perhaps, they would appear maxims of morality rather than laws in the strict sense (though "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not steal" are still cardinal points of legislation); but if we say this, we must also say that morality reaches deeper than the forms of law can reach. The commandments were meant to penetrate to the soul, even more than to direct the actions of men; and that they performed this office for the choice spirits of the race of Israel cannot be doubted.

It cannot of course be supposed that the whole people of Israel, either at the time of the desert wanderings or for many centuries afterwards, received the ten commandments in that manner of full acceptance which was designed by Moses; they were an influence which worked gradually; and, under all the circumstances, this could not have been otherwise. But those Israelites who really embraced the commandments as a divine law were truly elevated by them, and did not forget them; and while it must be confessed that something more powerful was needed thoroughly to purify human nature from all evil propensities, the commandments did act powerfully in that direction. No doubt the commandment as to keeping the sabbath day is more valuable in its spirit than in its letter.

We must not be surprised if Moses sought to enforce some of these commandments, and especially that against idolatry, with too great an exercise of material force; if it be true that he slew many of the idolaters in the matter of the golden calf, we certainly should say so. These idolaters, it must be remembered, were intending to worship Jehovah (Exodus xxxii. 5). But in a rough age rough things are done, even by the best men; and the commandments are a proof that the higher ideal of Abraham, if not embraced by Moses in that lofty universality with which Abraham embraced it, had still a true abode in the heart of Moses. It was Moses who made the ideals of Abraham a great practical force in the world; he narrowed them somewhat in doing so, but his service to mankind was nevertheless of the highest kind.

What are we to say of the Israelites—the people whom Moses led? Scarcely as yet a nation, they were being formed into a nation. The current of a common feeling did run through them, even at the time of the Exodus; and it was plainly strengthened

by the time they made their onslaught on Canaan. We must be content with partial virtue in such a people, provided it be a growing virtue. That they were sometimes cowardly we may believe; their refusal to obey Moses, when he first ordered the invasion of Canaan after the mission of the spies, is an instance. But on the whole we shall not think them cowardly; nay rather we shall honour them for their courage; and if they felt no compunction or qualm in slaying men of alien race who stood in their way, we must remember how long it was before even Christian nations learned to exercise mercy towards men of wholly alien race and different belief from themselves.

Let me finally quote from the Bible a well-known passage in commendation of the Israelites, such as the Bible itself seldom gives them: it is part of the prophecy attributed to the great heathen seer, Balaam (Numbers xxiii.):

From Aram hath Balak brought me,  
The king of Moab from the mountains of the East:  
Come, curse me Jacob,  
And come, defy Israel.  
How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?  
And how shall I defy, whom Jehovah hath not defied?  
For from the top of the rocks I see him,  
And from the hills I behold him:  
Lo, it is a people that dwell alone,  
And shall not be reckoned among the nations.  
Who can count the dust of Jacob,  
Or number the fourth part of Israel?  
Let me die the death of the righteous,  
And let my last end be like his!  
Rise up, Balak, and hear;  
Hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor!  
God is not a man, that he should lie;  
Neither the son of man, that he should repent:  
Hath he said, and shall he not do it?  
Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?  
Behold, I have received commandment to bless:  
And he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.  
He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob,  
Neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel:  
Jehovah his God is with him,  
And the shout of a king is among them.

The great patriot and lawgiver, with whom the latter part of the present chapter has been concerned, died just before the Israelites actually entered Canaan; his faithful brother Aaron, and his no less faithful sister Miriam, having died before him.



## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IX

### THE NAME "JEHOVAH"

THE Hebrew word, the pronunciation of which is now thought to be represented to us modern Europeans by "Yahweh," was formerly written "Jehovah." In our ordinary translations, both Authorised and Revised, "Jehovah" is sometimes found; but generally it is replaced by the phrase "the LORD" (which corresponds to the Greek of the Septuagint version and the Latin of the Vulgate); the capital letters indicating that it is *not* a translation of the Hebrew "Adonai," which in our versions is translated by "the Lord," in the ordinary small letters. No doubt the design of all the translators just mentioned (Greek, Latin, or English) was to take away from the minds of their readers any idea that the God mentioned was *only* the God of the Jews. But as that idea really is present in parts of the Old Testament (the most remarkable passage of this nature is Judges xi. 24), it is not proper, in a work like the present at any rate, to use artificial means for the purpose of preventing it from being recognised.

It would seem then to follow, if we wish to be accurate, that this Hebrew word should be translated by "Yahweh." But I have not done so, and for this reason. Ordinary people who read about "Yahweh" have an obscure feeling of puzzlement, and hardly feel that the name implies any sacredness. Now I am most unwilling that any one should think that the God of the Old Testament is not sacred to us. Though it is true that the ideas of the race of Israel respecting God sometimes fell low, they sometimes rose very high; and I cannot think that we ought to disjoin ourselves from them. The name "Jehovah" does imply to ordinary people some sacredness; and therefore I have used it.

Finally, in respect of one particular phrase, I hope I may be excused for having sometimes written "Jehovah Sabaoth," representing the Hebrew words, sometimes as in the ordinary translations, "The Lord of hosts."

## CHAPTER X

### ISRAEL'S EARTHLY IDEAL ATTAINED: DAVID

I MUST not allow my reader for a moment to forget the double process of thought and feeling of which I am tracing the development in the race of Israel; one branch of it lying in the background, hardly beginning to send out its tender shoots, the ideal conceived by Abraham of a blessing about to accrue to all mankind through his progeny; the other branch, also germinating in the thoughts of that same Abraham, the plain intelligible purpose, divinely permitted rather than divinely enjoined, that his posterity should inherit the land of Canaan.

This intelligible purpose, this ideal suited to the superficial strata of the human heart rather than to man's diviner instincts, had been seized with vigour by Moses; and though the diviner morality had also touched Moses, yet when he died, it was the earthly ideal which stood out preeminently as the goal of the Israelites. Already, even while outside the boundaries of Canaan, had the Israelites under Moses vanquished two Amorite kings, slain or driven out their people, and occupied their territory. Now, under Joshua, they were about to enter Canaan itself; and for a very long time the militant purpose, the conquering instinct, was supreme among them. The feeling of brotherhood between Israelite and Israelite existed however, and was a softening agency, though often disturbed by local quarrels; and a sublime sense of the being and working of Jehovah, as the one Supreme Deity, animated the noblest spirits of the nation. These ardent souls felt that Jehovah had been their deliverer, and therefore refused all recognition, even the smallest, to other deities, or even to the names of other deities; but it was long before this conviction penetrated the mass of the Israelites.

It is the era of Israelite conquest, however, on which I am now entering. Under Joshua the victorious race occupied many parts of Canaan. Yet the Israelites no more effected the conquest of



Canaan with a single blow than the Saxons, eighteen centuries afterwards, occupied Britain after a single campaign. We see clearly from various passages in the book of Joshua (xiii. 13, xv. 63, xvi. 10, xvii. 12, 13), and still more from the first chapter of Judges, that for a long time Israelites and Canaanites lived side by side over the greater part of Canaan; and there was some mingling of the races. Sometimes the Israelites enslaved the Canaanites; occasionally the Canaanite chiefs conquered and enslaved the Israelites in their neighbourhood. Temporary incursions and victories there were too on the part of more distant nations; now it was Moabites or Ammonites, now again the Midianites, but at last mainly the Philistines, who obtained predominance in this way. The Israelites were by no means always the masters of the territory which they had won.

Still, the intrinsic cohesion of the tribes of Israel made itself felt more and more, and proved superior to all the material weapons of their rivals. At this time, we cannot doubt, began the celebration in song and story of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and of the "Wars of Jehovah," which expanded at last into those famous narratives which we now read in the books of Exodus and Numbers; and the more ancient heroes, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, would not be forgotten in such recitals. Israel felt the pride of national prowess; and even superior to this pride would be the awe felt at the power of Jehovah, who had worked such great things on their behalf. Not wholly pure was the religious sentiment in Israel; yet it was purer, and more justly founded, than any similar feeling in any other nation then existing.

But it was precisely in respect of the religion that a serious problem now arose, disordering to the welfare of the nation during many centuries, and leaving its mark even when the final settlement had been reached, and when the problem as a problem had disappeared. The Canaanites, where not extirpated, were slowly being absorbed into the Israelite nation; and yet, in the process of being absorbed, they exercised an influence on the Israelites. This was likely to be true especially of the Hittites, now known to have been a race of commanding power; but indeed the Canaanites generally are likely to have possessed a more advanced civilisation than that to which the Israelites had attained. Hence the surviving Canaanites influenced the Israelites, and quite as much in religion as in other things; the local shrines did not at once lose the authority with which they had been accredited of

old, and the Israelites frequently worshipped at them. It must be borne in mind that the Supreme Being had always been worshipped by the truest Israelites under such names as Elohim, Adonai, El Shaddai, as well as under the commanding name of Jehovah; and there appeared little objection, superficially speaking, to the name of Baal being added to these appellations. We have, however, to consider in such cases not merely the bare name taken in itself, but the associations with which long use has imbued the name. Such names as Elohim and Adonai recalled, quite as much as Jehovah, those pleadings of man with God, and that help given by God to man, of which Israelite history is full; and though the manner of that divine help was becoming transformed and materialised in the traditional narratives, the remembrance of it even under this transformation was a possession of great value. The name Baal had associations of far vaguer and less worthy character, and it was difficult to abolish these if the name was to be accepted. Our means of judgment at the present day cannot but be imperfect as to what was possible in the use of terms so ancient. We have reason (to which I will shortly advert) for saying that many Israelites worshipped God under the name of Baal without any polytheistic idea being involved in such worship, or any desertion of the worship of Jehovah; and yet it is probable that the rejection of the name by the higher spirits of the Israelite race was a right rejection. The quarrel on this point was long continued and was sometimes of great bitterness, especially in northern Israel, where the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon gave greater strength to the worship of Baal; and though I have said that the name of Baal was sometimes used as practically having the same meaning as Jehovah, yet the use of it as meaning a rival deity to Jehovah was probably more frequent.

Both from their assimilation to the aboriginal Canaanites and from their own crude and primitive character, the Israelites were prone to another practice censured by Moses, idolatry. Though the central shrine at Shiloh, where the tabernacle and ark were, had no idol, yet there are passages in the book of Judges (viii. 27 and xvii. 1-5) which show that Jehovah was sometimes represented under the form of an idol, in spite of the Mosaic prohibition. Human sacrifices again were not unknown; and though the 106th psalm, written in later and purer days, says that these were offered "unto the idols of Canaan," the worship of Jehovah was not altogether free from them either. A recognition of human



sacrifice to Jehovah, as a lawful act, has crept into the book of Leviticus (xxvii. 28, 29):

Notwithstanding, no devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto Jehovah of all that he hath, whether of man or beast, or of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto Jehovah. None devoted<sup>1</sup>, which shall be devoted of men, shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death.

This general precept finds an illustration in the sacrifice of his daughter by Jephthah; but that poor innocent victim was honoured with such special memorials after her death (Judges xi. 39, 40) that we must suppose the case to have been a rare one.

The Israelites in the time of the judges deserve our esteem, despite their frailties, even as in their desert wanderings; they had warm hearts and a courageous spirit; and if we must sometimes reproach them for cruelty, we must remember in how little account human life was held all over the world in that day. The later moralists of Israel reproached them for their too great clemency to the conquered Canaanites; a reproach in which we certainly cannot join.

It is not my object to dwell on the details of the history of Israel; and the picturesque narratives, half history and half poetry, which are associated with the names of Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, must not detain me here. But the strange and painful history of the sin, punishment, and restoration of the tribe of Benjamin, which occupies the last three chapters of the book of Judges, is worth noting as an example both of wild justice and of those reactions of pity to which the Israelites after a deed of ultra-severity were prone. It is permissible to believe that the bloodshed recorded in those chapters has been exaggerated, as is often the case in the Biblical pages.

From the southern desert up to the range of Lebanon in the north, Israel at last stood out as the people that held command, except as to the south-western angle of this territory, where the Philistines still remained as antagonists not wholly unequal in force. The Philistines were the more dexterous, and the better craftsmen; for we read that the Israelites had to have recourse to the Philistines to put an edge on their tools, and the weapons of the Israelites were of the rudest kind; swords and spears were rare among them (1 Samuel xiii. 19-22). The reason of this was

<sup>1</sup> Though the Hebrew word here translated "devoted" generally means "devoted because accursed," this is not always the case (see Micah iv. 13); and the context in the present passage does not imply a curse at all.

partly the natural backwardness of the Israelites, and the suspicion in which they were held by their neighbours; but partly also, because living as they did on the hills, their communications with the countries round them were not easy; whereas the Philistines from their plains near the seacoast had easy intercourse with all the world. But the Israelites were the more numerous people, and inhabited a country more difficult to attack; and they at last determined on a step which had for its direct object the increase of their military force. They asked their great prophet and judge, Samuel, to choose for them a king, who should lead them in battle.

If the book of Deuteronomy had lain before Samuel, he would have seen that this request was a perfectly legitimate one, and that directions had been laid down in that book as to the appointment of a king over the Israelites. (Deuteronomy xvii. 14-20.) But the book of Deuteronomy (as was shown in the preceding chapter of this work) was not yet written, and was not to be written until long after Samuel's date; and Samuel, both for selfish and for unselfish reasons, disapproved of the request which was urged upon him. It involved a restraint on his own authority; and it brought in a possibility that the worship of Jehovah might no longer be the centre of action and feeling in Israel. We must do Samuel the justice of saying that a regard for other sides of human nature besides the success of the warrior was probably the chief cause of his reluctance to comply with the request of the Israelites. However, he was not strong enough to resist them; and after taking all the measures in his power to prevent the worship of Jehovah suffering, he chose or accepted as king, and anointed with the oil of ceremonial sacredness, Saul the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. The Biblical narrative which tells us how Saul was in search of his father's asses when Samuel met him and invited him to a sacrificial feast, and anointed him to be king, can hardly be the full truth on such a matter. Some previous discussion there must have been between Samuel and the Israelite chiefs; and the question occurs, Why was the new king chosen from the very smallest of the tribes of Israel? The answer probably is, that Samuel had some distrust of the tribe of Ephraim, then in chief power; while yet he could not venture to select the new king from the tribe of Judah, which was powerful enough to excite the jealousy of Ephraim; but the tribe of Benjamin, which lay between the two, was so weak as to excite no jealousy; and Samuel probably thought that a king



selected from so weak a tribe would be amenable to his advice. If this was his motive, it proved a mistake.

The ensuing situation was most delicate, and in the sequel proved disastrous. For the first time in the records of history, we find ourselves in the presence of that quarrel which has had so many counterparts afterwards, the quarrel between Church and State. The quarrel in this instance was only too natural; but the particular causes which the Bible assigns for it are wholly inadequate, and it is clear that something not recorded lies behind them. What that something was we cannot certainly know, but we may with some likelihood conjecture.

From the first book of Chronicles (viii. 33, 34 and ix. 39, 40) we learn that Saul had a son named Eshbaal, and a grandson named Merib-baal. Now these two persons are the same as those who are named, in the second book of Samuel, Ishbosheth and Mephishosheth; and it may be asked how it happens that we find this variation in the names of well-known persons. The answer is easy; the name Ishbosheth means "the man of shame," and was not a possible name for Saul to give to his son; but the name Eshbaal, "the man of Baal" as we may pretty certainly translate it, was a perfectly possible name, if only Saul recognised Baal as a name of the supreme God. Ishbosheth was in fact a nickname, used by persons who were not minded to use the word Baal in any honourable connexion; and similarly Mephishosheth was a nickname for Merib-baal. The book of Chronicles has, by a sort of accident, preserved the true name in each case. Merib-baal probably means "Baal contends"; and this name doubtless also involves an honourable reference to Baal, just as the name Jehoiarib ("Jehovah will contend"), which we find in 1 Chronicles ix. 10, implies honour paid to Jehovah. There was a more ancient hero of Israel whose original name, it is probable, implied honour to Baal; this is the hero and judge whom we generally name Gideon. According to the Bible, Gideon was the real name of this hero, Jerubbaal a nickname; but when all the circumstances are considered, it is probable that the reverse is the case; and that Gideon (which means "the cutter down") was a name attached to Jerubbaal on account of his valiant deeds; just as Charles Martel (the "Hammerer") acquired his second name in mediæval times through his warlike exploits.

Whatever be the case as to Jerubbaal, we may confidently say that when Saul and Jonathan had sons to whom they respectively attached the names Eshbaal and Merib-baal, they intended

the name Baal to be interpreted honourably; and the probability is that this was done with but little idea of rivalry between Baal and Jehovah; Baal was accepted, like Elohim and El Shaddai, as a fitting appellative for the Most High God. But to Samuel the name of Baal would be odious; for the acceptance of it put Canaanite and Phœnician religion on the same kind of level as the religion of Israel.

I cannot but think that the deep-seated cause of quarrel between Samuel and Saul lay in this fact, that Saul desired a peaceable unity of worship between Israelite and Canaanite, whereas Samuel was with all his heart opposed to this. Taking this as our clue, we shall see why Samuel was greatly offended when Saul took upon himself to offer sacrifice, Samuel having been late in keeping his engagement to do so. A king or chieftain of unblemished orthodoxy might offer sacrifice unreprieved (as Gideon, Jephthah, Manoah did, and as David appears to have done afterwards, 2 Samuel vi. 13); but Saul was suspected by Samuel. So likewise we must infer that the mission on which Samuel sent Saul for the extirpation of the Amalekites (a cruel and wicked act surely, though Samuel treated it as a religious duty) was a kind of test by which Saul might show himself a true worshipper of Jehovah. Saul did not adequately fulfil the test; he behaved with what we should consider extreme cruelty, but not cruelly enough to satisfy Samuel. It is difficult to express the degree in which the whole narrative offends against every moral principle which we ourselves hold sacred! Let it be remembered that when, some years afterwards, David commits the great sin of procuring the murder of Uriah, and on being reproved by the prophet Nathan for the wicked act, says "I have sinned"; he receives what is essentially pardon, though not unmixed with punishment. Yet when Saul, reproved by Samuel for what is regarded as the great sin of saving alive the king of the Amalekites and the best of their cattle, says "I have sinned," pardon is not accorded to him! That, it seems, was too heinous an offence to be forgiven, even upon the repentance of the sinner! Let us hope that the story is inexact; for the moral error of the Biblical historian, though considerable, is not so great as the moral error of Samuel, if he actually said and did what the Bible reports him to have said and done.

Inexact the story probably is; but it will be difficult to free Samuel from the reproach of fanaticism. The religion of men cannot but share in the imperfection which belongs to their entire



train of thinking on matters of right and wrong; and while the attitude which Samuel takes up towards Saul is that of the moral reprover and judge, Samuel himself was all unconsciously immersed in injustice and cruelty. The sin of these Amalekites was that their ancestors, some hundreds of years before Samuel's time, had committed an unprovoked attack on the Israelites when the latter were on the first marches out of Egypt. Moses in his anger had recorded a divine malediction against the whole Amalekite race, and Samuel interpreted the malediction as justifying the command which he laid upon Saul. It was plainly only a single tribe of Amalekites that were thus massacred; but the iniquity of the character of the act is not altered thereby.

Yet Samuel had an upright character; we must recognise this, while not denying the errors into which he fell. If, as I have supposed, the quarrel between him and Saul had regard to the question of strictness or laxity in religious association with others, the cause is a perfectly intelligible one, and examples of it are abundant in the world of to-day; but the details of it in the case with which I am dealing cannot at this distance of time be fully clear to us. It is some slight corroboration, however, of the view here taken, that Saul, throughout the narrative of which I have been speaking, while never using either the phrase "Jehovah my God" or the phrase "Jehovah our God," does twice say to Samuel "Jehovah thy God"; as if he knew that Jehovah was more peculiarly Samuel's God than his own: though he by no means implied that he did not himself owe allegiance to Jehovah.

The rupture between Samuel and Saul was complete; and the Bible now tells us that Samuel took a momentous and startling step. Visiting the small town of Bethlehem, he summoned the elders of the town to a sacrifice at the house of Jesse, and there anointed the youngest son of Jesse, David, to be king over all Israel. In this way is introduced to us that historical character, who in after times was frequently reckoned as the greatest glory of his nation; and who certainly raised the Israelites to their highest point of temporal power.

I must apologise to my reader, now and many times over in the course of this book of mine, for the bareness and dryness with which I am compelled to refer to narratives which in the Bible are instinct with beauty and poetry. Even that extraordinary story of the massacre of the Amalekites at the command of Samuel, of which I have just been treating, is in the Biblical pages full of solemnity and dignity; and similarly the anointing of David by

Samuel is told in a manner which makes us feel that a great history has in this act a worthy beginning, full of interest for all men through all time. Such is the atmosphere of the Bible; such is its power; and I do not doubt that that atmosphere, that power, came from a worthy source; only I must add that they reach us through a broken and darkening medium. To take the present instance; how can we believe that, if Samuel anointed David to be king over Israel in the presence of his father, his brethren, and the elders of Bethlehem, the purport of the act was not known to all present; how, if the purport of the act was known to all present, could it fail to reach the ears of Saul; and how, if it reached the ears of Saul, could he pass it over unnoticed? It is true that the sacrifice is apparently intended to cast a veil over the subsequent and much more important act, the anointing of David, but could it be an effective veil? Surely not. To anoint David as king was to rebel against Saul; and Saul must have treated it as rebellion. Yet Saul, immediately afterwards, accepted David as his harp-player; and David very markedly treats Saul as the true anointed king of Israel, and never refers to himself as having been anointed by Samuel. We must conclude that that anointing was a fable. But Samuel is likely to have had intimate association with David, and to have inspired him with that zeal for the worship of Jehovah which was in Samuel's own heart. Saul had worshipped Jehovah; but David worshipped Jehovah exclusively and passionately, and this was what Samuel desired, and what he had not found in Saul. It is not improbable then that Samuel incited David with predictions of future greatness, perhaps even royal greatness; and David, being in the impressionable season of youth, would be much moved by such incitements; but further we cannot pursue the matter.

That David won his entrance into Saul's court, and thereby the beginning of political importance, by his skill in harp-playing, as the Biblical account tells us, is quite credible. Saul, after his quarrel with Samuel, was afflicted by a deep melancholy (which may have been a natural tendency in him); and the minstrel who by his melodies could charm the despondency away was to him a priceless treasure. Not only Saul, but Jonathan the son of Saul, was affected by the charm of David; and when David added to his softer skill the valour of a daring warrior, Jonathan became absorbed in his friend, and appeared ready to think that David, after Saul's death, would be a worthier successor to the royal dignity than he himself would be. But to Saul this could



not be pleasing; and a germ of distrust was very early laid in Saul's mind against David.

In the arts of war, as in the arts of peace, David began to be greatly distinguished. The story of his single combat with the giant Goliath of Gath is indeed doubtful; for the feat of slaying Goliath is attributed, later on in the books of Samuel (2 Samuel xxi. 19) to another native of Bethlehem, Elhanan; and such a deed is more likely to have been wrongly attributed to David, than wrongly taken away from him. Yet David must have had real warlike skill; and he had besides those graces of youth which win the hearts of men, and which Saul, though a good stout soldier, had not. Whether he did actually kill ten times as many of the vapouring Philistines as Saul was of little consequence; the people liked to say that he had done so; and the distich

Saul has slain his thousands  
And David his ten thousands,

was sung by the women of Israel, when they celebrated the victors with their timbrels and their dancing.

But by this the jealousy of Saul was actively awakened; and David, who had been his good genius, now began to appear to him as his evil genius. Saul probably knew that David was loyal to himself; but the train was clearly being laid which would lead to the displacement of Jonathan from his natural succession to the royal dignity; and the worst of it was that Jonathan did not resent his own future exclusion. This was the prospect which made Saul's feelings towards David, in the end, unappeasable. David's life was endangered, and he had to fly the court, and to take refuge in the wilds south or east of Judæa. But he did not go alone; his relations, and a number of discontented turbulent spirits, gathered to him, and he found himself at the head of a band of four hundred men. Afraid, and with good reason, of the enmity of Saul towards his family, he brought his father and mother from their home, and requested the king of Moab to give them protection. The request was granted; and David might have remembered in after years the service which the king of Moab thus rendered him, better than he did. It is not probable however that his father and mother survived to see him king; for we hear nothing of them afterwards.

The period of David's life during which he was a wanderer and a fugitive was a period which was signalised by much that was noble, by much also that was savage and cruel, in his actions. Neither the good nor the bad can be to us a matter of absolute

certainty; but on the whole we ought to accept both. The good lies in his unswerving loyalty to Saul, who was seeking to kill him; and it culminates in the pathetic scene (twice recorded, so that the ordinary reader of the Bible thinks it happened twice, but no doubt the event is the same in both narratives) in which David has the opportunity of killing Saul in his sleep, and is urged to do so by his nephew Abishai, but refrains; and after taking away from Saul some article to prove that he had had the power over him (a piece of his skirt in one version of the story, his spear in the other version) protests, though from a distance, his own innocence. The old tenderness of Saul for David revived, it is said, under this appeal; "Is this thy voice, my son David?" he cried; and a reconciliation followed. But such a reconciliation could only be temporary; it was clear that David meant himself to be Saul's successor, and it was clear that Saul would admit no such claim; in the end, David had to fly from the land of Israel, and to take refuge in the court of the Philistine king Achish, of Gath. Here his position was in the highest degree critical; for with his men of war following him (six hundred now in number) he could not be the guest of Achish, unless he were prepared to be the ally of Achish; and this meant fighting against Israel. Yet, if David were to fight against Israel, his chance of being king of his own people in after years would be most seriously prejudiced. How was he to find his way out of this dilemma? In the first place, he persuaded Achish to allow him to live in the town of Ziklag, on the borders of the Israelite country; and here he was more removed from the observation of the Philistines, and not so liable to minute questionings. His subsequent proceedings must be told in the words of the Bible itself (1 Samuel xxvii. 7-12):

And the number of the days that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months. And David and his men went up, and made a raid upon the Geshurites, and the Girzites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were the inhabitants of the land, which were of old, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt. And David smote the land, and saved neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel; and he returned, and came to Achish. And Achish said, Whither have ye made a raid to-day? And David said, Against the South of Judah, and against the South of the Jerahmeelites, and against the South of the Kenites. And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring them to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so hath been his manner all the while he hath dwelt in the country of the Philistines. And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.



That is a staggering narrative for anyone who believes that the ordinary course of David's life was blameless. Certainly it is a cruel and perfidious act that is described, and described without censure, by the Biblical historian; an act very antagonistic indeed to the fulfilment of that noble promise with which the divine voice had exalted and comforted Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed!" But we have to remember that the side of Abraham's ideal which David was engaged in carrying out was not, on the whole, the heavenly side. He had been hasty and fierce, even when within the borders of the land of Israel, in his conduct towards Nabal; and it is evident that, when brought into straits, he thought it no sin to extricate himself by killing men of alien race, against whom he had no shadow of grievance. This was indeed merely to follow the morality of his age. Homer, in the ninth book of the *Odyssey*, relates how Odysseus and his followers attacked (without any provocation) the city of the Cicones, slew the men and carried off the women and much booty; the raid turns out unfortunately, but is not regarded as a crime. So too the writer of the book of Judges (in the eighteenth chapter) relates without any censure how six hundred warriors of the tribe of Dan slew the "quiet and secure people" who lived near Sidon, and took their lands from them. If a great hunter of to-day, being imprisoned by a negro chief of central Africa, were promised his liberty on condition of his bringing a hundred tusks of elephants to his captor, it is hardly likely that he would feel remorse in shooting the fifty elephants who would supply those tusks. As little did David feel remorse in killing these unlucky Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites; it happened to be necessary to his designs, and the question of morality did not enter into his view of the matter. Reflecting on this deed, we shall hardly join with the Bible in calling David "a man after God's own heart"; but we shall not lose all our interest in him.

Very narrowly did David escape the danger he was in at the court of Achish. His personal charm, as on other occasions, stood him in good stead; and Achish thoroughly believed in his honesty. But the Philistines in general did not trust him; and this turned out as luckily for him as the opposite feeling in Achish; for thereby he was enabled to avoid accompanying the Philistine army when they journeyed to battle with the Israelites. It is a curious question, what he would have done, if the Philistines had trusted him. He could hardly have avoided going with them to

Mount Gilboa; and would he then have joined them in good faith, and fought against his own countrymen? It would certainly have been his duty to do so, when once he had undertaken to accompany Achish; but we cannot be quite certain what his conduct would have been. It was a piece of the greatest good fortune to him that the Philistines themselves relieved him of his difficulty; and Saul and three of Saul's sons fell in the battle of Mount Gilboa, the Israelites being for the moment worsted, without David having had the smallest hand in producing such a result.

Immediately the tide, which had so long been flowing against David, turned. Without delay he presented himself in Hebron, one of the chief cities of his own tribe of Judah; and that tribe accepted him as king. Northern Israel, it is true, did not do so as yet; but the tried valour of David and his comrades, never yet defeated in battle, shone out conspicuously as against the defeat of Saul and the feebleness of Saul's surviving son, Eshbaal. In the end, not without certain crimes on the part of David's friends (which David punished when the offenders were weak, not when they were strong), David became undisputed king over all the tribes of Israel. His own relations and friends were his chief servants; and the priesthood were wholly in his favour. All the parts of the nation breathed for the moment a uniform tenor of will, and were governed by a vigour and a singleness of motive that had never been known in them before.

Wonderful indeed was the success of the Israelites under these favourable conditions! wonderful was the success of a purpose, held tenaciously through many centuries, and at last emerging in full active force! The stronghold of the Jebusites, thenceforth known by the famous name of Jerusalem, fell before the generalship of David and the prowess of his nephew Joab; and David acquired a capital city of great natural strength, and which soon became dignified and splendid in outward aspect. Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Edomites, and Ammonites, fell in succession before the arms of David; and his dominions extended now right to the borders of the great empires of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt, and to the northern kingdom of Tyre.

It is true that this great kingdom, with all the sagacity and enthusiasm that had founded it, had its weaknesses. The rift between the northern and southern tribes, between Ephraim and Judah, lay underneath the temporary unanimity of the people. It is certain also that the loose popular religion of the Israelites, with its worship of the "Baalim," was at discord with the severer



and purer ideas of the central priesthood; and the jealousy between Ephraim and Judah was pointed by the fact that a laxer religion was prevalent in the northern tribes, which were more affected by Phœnician and Syrian customs than the mountainous region of Judah, in the south of Palestine, could possibly be. Then again, the establishment of the royal court, and presently of the temple, at Jerusalem (though the temple was not actually built till the reign of David's successor) afforded fresh ground of discontent to the northern tribes, whose feeling was that, while they were taxed equally with the tribe of Judah, the advantages ensuing from such taxation appertained in quite undue measure to the tribe which lived in the close neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and scarcely at all to those who lived fifty or a hundred miles away from that lofty and rock-engirdled city.

Another danger to the kingdom of Israel arose from the resentment of the surrounding nations whom David had subdued. No small severity had been employed in their subjugation. For example, his war against Moab is thus briefly described ( 2 Samuel viii. 2):

And he smote Moab, and measured them with the line, making them to lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive. And the Moabites became servants to David, and brought presents.

The Biblical historian does not think it necessary to assign any reason for this slaughter; it is not said that the Moabites had been faithless or treacherous; even if they had been simply aggressive, which is a possibility, we are not informed of it. Neither is any special offence alleged against the Edomites; yet we find in the first book of Kings (xi. 14-17) this incidental account of David's war against Edom, which is more briefly mentioned in the second book of Samuel:

And Jehovah raised up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom. For it came to pass, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, and had smitten every male in Edom (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom); that Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt; Hadad being yet a little child.

No doubt there is exaggeration in the destruction indicated in this last passage, for the Edomites were not altogether a powerless nation after this; but we must suppose great slaughter at any rate; and it is evident that Joab, while loyal and able, was perfectly ruthless towards enemies, personal or political. Nor

had David any sufficient desire to restrain the bloodthirsty propensities of his lieutenant.

Truly it is not on the ground of universal beneficence that we must praise the reign of David; and some may ask why we should praise it at all, any more than a hundred other reigns of truculent kings, who have lived in brief splendour and then left barely a name behind them, such as is read once and immediately forgotten by the sojourner among the records of the past. But the fibre of vital strength may lie buried among strange surroundings; and so it is here. These cruelties of David and the Israelites, which the Biblical historians recount with such calm indifference, were sins and wrong-doings, it is true; and they produced their natural fruit of retaliation afterwards, in the disasters and sorrows of Israelites of later generations. Yet, strange though it may seem, we must account David a tender-hearted man. The contrast in the character of a single man, of tenderness within certain limits, and indifference to suffering outside those limits, is far from unknown even at the present day; and all through the life of David this contrast is forced strongly upon us. It was not a hard-hearted man who mourned for his enemy Saul as well as for his friend Jonathan after their death in battle; and it was not a hard-hearted man who, when Nathan reproved him for his murder of Uriah and his adultery with Bathsheba, answered, "I have sinned against Jehovah"; it was not a hard-hearted man who prayed so fervently for the life of his infant child; and it was not a hard-hearted man who, after his rebellious son Absalom had been slain, cried out, "Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" It may be asked whether we have any security as to the truth of such narratives as these. To this it may be replied that there is no character in the Old Testament, I would almost say in the whole Bible, about whom so much is told us, and so much that is entirely probable and unexaggerated, as David. The accounts of his life in the books of Samuel and in the opening of the books of Kings occupy nearly forty chapters; and though there is something unhistorical in the early narrative, when he first comes upon the scene, and a few repetitions in the succeeding chapters, yet on the whole we have an exceedingly natural picture of a spirited and vigorous youth, with a strain of pure feeling and true religion in him, but with the moral imperfections of his time and country, rising partly by his own merit and partly by good fortune into royal power; using that power, as was natural in those days, for military purposes, and



using it successfully; then sinking into the careless and selfish habits of an uncontrolled despot; suffering sorrow and calamity through his children, whom he had done little to train in the ways of virtue; yet to the end never losing that strain of conscience which had belonged to him in youth; a man desirous of doing right, though with such serious failings as greatly diminish the honour with which we would gladly regard him.

He was, all through his life, singularly attractive to his friends; and though Absalom at one moment succeeded in stealing the hearts of the people from him, his friends did not fail him even at that crisis, and the cloud was but temporary. Why should we be surprised that one who had so much personal popularity, and such immense prestige as a monarch, should have been presented to us with biographical details far fuller than have been supplied to us in the case of any other Israelite, and equalled in the case of but few historical characters of ancient times? And we must remember that the calamities of the nation subsequently, after the disruption, made David's reign stand out as a pinnacle of light in the eyes of later generations. It is true that David was not as popular in northern Israel as in his own tribe of Judah; but this made no difference as regards the zeal of his biographers; and the fact that the priesthood always and permanently looked up to him was another reason for both the original full record of his deeds, and the after preservation of that record. If we ask who were his biographers, the first book of Chronicles (xxix. 29) refers us to "the history of Samuel the seer, the history of Nathan the prophet, and the history of Gad the seer." That Samuel wrote about David is less probable than that Nathan and Gad wrote about him; it is likely however that we have evidence very nearly contemporary; and though the chapter which we may chiefly presume to be due to Gad (2 Samuel xxiv.) has undeniable marks of fiction, it probably is founded on fact. The offence of David which that chapter reckons so serious, his ordering a census of the Israelites to be taken, was very likely unpopular with many of the nation, but was in itself statesmanlike.

David, however, was not a statesman in any high sense; he did not wilfully oppress his people, and by the help of his Cherethites and Pelethites (a body-guard of Philistine extraction) he generally kept order in his own neighbourhood; but of permanent institutions hardly any is ascribed to him in the books of Samuel, beyond the appointment of certain officers attached to the court.

It may be presumed that justice between man and man had always been more or less provided for by primitive local institutions; and as long as these worked fairly well, the king would do better by not interfering; but still there would be cases where his personal judgment was necessary; and the pretext, and probably in part the true cause, of Absalom's rebellion was the neglect of David to attend to such duties as these. It is something, that so few acts of positive injustice or cruelty towards his own subjects, in so long a reign, are recorded against him. Yet his weakness in not punishing Joab for the murders of Abner and Amasa is a blot on David's fair fame; and a blot which was not wiped out by his dying injunction to Solomon, that Joab should not be suffered to have a peaceful death. The repentance which he so deeply felt, when reproved by Nathan, for his treacherous murder of Uriah, must lighten our censure of him in that case; but another cruel act, the putting to death of two sons and five grandsons of Saul, on the ground that Saul had slain without just cause certain of the Gibeonites in years long gone by, was a base iniquity cloaked by the pretence of a religious command. I would sooner credit David's counsellors than David himself as being the originators of such a deed; but David sanctioned it; and nothing in his whole career shows so plainly the weakness of moral fibre which underlay his brilliant qualities. The motive which led to the slaughter of these seven descendants of Saul was of course the fear of the possible revival of Saul's house in effective power. The reproaches cast upon David by Shimei on this ground were therefore not unjust.

We may fairly say that David apprehended the spiritual and sublime nature of God better than he apprehended God's moral nature. The honour of true spirituality must certainly be accorded to him if he was really the author of any of the psalms in our familiar book of Psalms. It is true that the main part of those psalms must be held to be of a date far later than David; for a captivity, which can be none other than the great Babylonian captivity, is referred to in some of them (Psalms xiv. liii. lxxxv. cvi. cvii. cxxvi. cxxxvii.); and even where this is not explicitly referred to, the tone of the psalm indicates that painful contact of Israel with heathen races, and that oppression by heathen races, which was only exemplified during or about the time of the Babylonian captivity (Psalms ix. x. xliv. lix. lxxiv. lxxix. lxxx. lxxxiii. lxxxix. cii.); and the joyousness of the return from the captivity is also plain in other psalms. So too the



temple, which was not built in the reign of David, is frequently mentioned. But when all this is allowed for, the probability that psalms actually composed by David would be recorded and might be preserved, must be remembered. The second book of Samuel attributes to him three songs or psalms; the beautiful lament over Saul and Jonathan in the first chapter; a psalm, which is the same as the eighteenth in our psalter, in the twenty-second chapter; and one in the twenty-third chapter, which has not found a place in the psalter. The psalm in the twenty-second chapter may perhaps be an expansion of the original composition; the last verse hardly appears to be genuine; but otherwise, there is no person who would seem so likely as David to be its author. In the fifty-first psalm of the psalter, the two last verses can hardly but belong to the time of the Babylonian captivity; but they may easily have been appended at a later date; and if we cannot certainly say that the main part of this psalm was David's confession of repentance after the murder of Uriah, at least there is no other character and event in the history of Israel whom it suits so well. A few, but not many, other psalms might conceivably be David's. The uncertainty which surrounds this whole question of authorship is not to be denied; but we shall hardly be wrong in thinking of David as a sacred psalmist, as well as a warrior and a king. In this relation, a greatness of spirit is not to be denied him; and when he brought up the ark, which contained the divine covenant, from the village in which it had rested so long to his newly won capital of Jerusalem, he linked himself with the historic religion of Israel and with the great experiences in which Moses had been God's chosen minister. He became affiliated to the patriarchs of his race.

We cannot indeed look upon David as the equal of Abraham or of Moses; he had not the broad spiritual vision of Abraham, or the extraordinary strength in organising, and the practical power, of Moses. Yet the fervour of these great men was in him too; his sins were many and his ideal was an imperfect one, but something of that glory which belongs to all true perception of deity had touched his thoughts and his imagination. As a man he is known to us better than any other Israelite; his anguish at the death of Absalom touches us even now, and we feel the attraction which so moved his contemporaries.

For the people of his own tribe, for the people of Judah, he had a fascination which we cannot share; and this was especially the case in times long after his own death. When Judah was

abandoned by the tribes of northern Israel and had fallen from her high estate; when Assyrians and Babylonians, and even Edomites and Moabites, began to insult the successors of David, to dismember and to ravage what remained of David's ancient realm; then prophet and psalmist recalled the golden age that had been, and thought of David with a passionate longing, and took his name as the symbol of their highest hopes. "My servant David shall be prince among them," said Ezekiel when forecasting the future of Israel; and "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David" was the cry of the enthusiastic multitude, who many centuries afterwards took that memorable journey down the slope of the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem.

We cannot put David on so high a pedestal; his distinctive characteristic was to raise the nation of Israel to its highest point of temporal power. But it was a fragile and brief-lived ideal which he brought to this temporary accomplishment; nor in the nature of things could it have been otherwise.

During the period which I have been sketching in this chapter, the religion of Israel was in many ways commingled with the religion of Canaan. A power was at work separating the two; and this power acted in the end surely, but slowly. No doubt all Israelites were circumcised; and sabbaths and other festivals were not ignored. But we have little precise information in the existing records on such matters as these.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE FALL OF THE EARTHLY IDEAL; THE RISE OF PROPHECY: ISAIAH

IN the reign of David, and equally in the reign of David's son and successor Solomon, Israel was one of the great nations of the earth. "She stretched out her branches unto the sea, and her boughs unto the river," says a psalmist of a later age, recalling in sorrow that splendid kingdom, whose ample boundaries were the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and the Euphrates on the east, which extended from Egypt in the south to Lebanon and the borders of Damascus in the north. But the equilibrium of that great structure was unstable.

Through the reign of Solomon the Israelite kingdom endured, and showed no apparent weakness. Solomon was a magnificent king; but can he in the true sense be called a wise king? Sagacious and strong-handed; on eminently good terms with the neighbouring monarchs, though harassed by some petty chiefs whom he could not quite suppress; a great builder of temples, palaces, cities; above all, the builder of that famous temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem, the traditional glories of which are dear even to-day to every Jew, and are a familiar piece of knowledge to Christians and Moslems as well. But Solomon never perceived, or never cared, that he was pressing burdens on the neck of large numbers of his subjects, who derived no adequate advantage in return for their submission to these burdens; he felt no reluctance to rush into every luxury, as if it were his personal right; and when his wives demanded "high places" in which they might worship the deities they respectively favoured, the Israelites had to provide the cost of these edifices. To many Israelites this was a scandal; to all a grievance. The storm was gathering, which burst upon his son Rehoboam; and he had no foresight of it.

However, he cultivated commerce, maritime as well as inland, and he built a navy; the most successful navy that the Israelites, it would seem, ever had. If he had been able to implant in his

fellow-countrymen the skill to traverse the great deep, which in the Tyrians was so remarkable, he would have done them a real service; but he did not touch their spirits in this way, at any rate. Did he touch their spirits in any way?

If we could believe that that noble prayer, which he is said to have offered up to God at the dedication of the temple, was really his, was the fruit of his own feeling and thought, we should place his religious spirit on a very high level indeed; for a prayer more full of the sense of trust in God, more adequate in its recognition of the duties and of the frailty of men, was never conceived. It is not unlikely that something in its general tone was really handed down by tradition or even by writing, for the means of writing were at hand, and the disposition to preserve such a royal supplication would hardly be quite wanting; and some argument in this direction may be drawn from the general identity of the terms in which the prayer is given in the first book of Kings (viii. 22-53) and the second book of Chronicles (vi. 14-42); for though identity between Kings and Chronicles in reporting spoken words is not unknown, it is not common, and this is by far the most remarkable instance of it.

Perhaps we may fairly say that a prayer was really composed by Solomon with the help of the religious persons who were in general intercourse with him, of whom we can hardly be wrong in saying that the prophet Nathan was the most remarkable. Such a prayer, briefly recorded, would be expanded in later ages; and though the identity between the two reports is in general extremely remarkable, they diverge in the last few verses; and the divergence is such as to show that the writer of the first book of Kings had some captivity (and no doubt the Babylonian captivity) vividly before his mind as a present or recent fact, while the writer of the second book of Chronicles (who was considerably later) lived in a time of comparative rest and peace. Verbal exactitude cannot then be supposed to exist in the prayer; but some genuine reminiscence may probably be in it. As it stands in the Bible to-day, it is one of the noblest religious compositions ever conceived in the mind of man.

The same kind of credit which belongs to Solomon in regard to the prayer on which I have been commenting, belongs to him also in regard to the book of Proverbs. No doubt a considerable part of that book dates from a later time than Solomon altogether; but some of it is likely to have been composed by Solomon and his wise men; the sententious tone, remote from prophecy or



lament or invective, belongs rather to a time of quietude and prosperity. That Solomon himself was acquainted with the art of writing, the Bible does not tell us; but his learned men would of course be able to write. It would be interesting if we could believe, what the Bible tells us, that Solomon "spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes." But there is not much in the book of Proverbs to confirm this; the most remarkable passage in this direction is that which describes the forethought of the ant (vi. 6-8.)

It was no doubt in furtherance of his zeal in building that Solomon reduced to servitude many of the Canaanite inhabitants of the country (1 Kings ix. 20, 21); but this must be reckoned rather among his tyrannical than among his good deeds.

After his death the crash came. The story is too well known for me to recapitulate in detail, how when Rehoboam came to be crowned king in Shechem (doubtless in order to receive the homage of the northern tribes specially), he was met by Jeroboam and other representatives of the ten tribes with demands for an alleviation of their burdens; how rashly and insultingly he refused those demands; and how the ten tribes of the north withdrew their allegiance from him, and made Jeroboam their king. The folly of Rehoboam is proverbial; but are we to account Jeroboam and the ten tribes blameless? That is impossible. They knew their own strength; and their plans must have been laid with considerable skill; but they had never asked themselves how, in forming their new State, they might recover for the purpose of their own cohesion that feeling of loyalty, which they had broken in regard to the old State. They never did recover it; and the consequence to themselves was disastrous. Nothing is more remarkable, in all the subsequent history, than the contrast between the unswerving loyalty of the tribe of Judah (with which it seems the tribe of Benjamin joined in) towards their kings of the line of David, and the entire lack of steadfast principle in the dealings of the northern tribes with their successive kings. While Judah has but one dynasty, and reverences the memory of David with unceasing persistence, five dynasties, and four kings who founded no dynasty, succeed one another in the annals of the ten tribes; and the change of dynasty is generally accomplished amid scenes of indiscriminate blood-shedding. Some of the kings of the ten tribes appear to have been able men of the world, in particular perhaps the two Jeroboams and Ahab; but

there is nothing in the whole political history of northern Israel, during the two hundred and fifty-five years of its duration, to distinguish it from a hundred other transient kingdoms which in primitive days had their rise and fall without leaving any mark on the world, like ships which cross the ocean and leave no trail behind them to show where they have been.

It is a singular and a noble characteristic of the Biblical historians (who of course were of the tribe of Judah), that they make no reproach whatever against the ten tribes for breaking off from the political dominance of the line of David. That rupture, the Bible says, was in accordance with the will of God. We may well agree with the Bible in saying so; and though we may perhaps not put the reasons quite as the Bible puts them, yet certainly the sin of Solomon lies at the root of the matter, as the Bible affirms. When a severe ruler does not compensate for severity of rule by imparting to the people whom he rules a stimulus towards nobler conditions of living, he becomes a tyrant; and that was what Solomon had become. It has been one of the great characteristics of the Israelite race, all through their history, not to yield to tyranny; and though they have not always been able to resist tyranny in warlike ways, yet sometimes they have been able; and this was a case in which they had the ability, and used it. So far as the resistance went, the ten tribes did right.

But the Biblical historians affirm that Jeroboam sinned religiously, in taking the ten tribes away from their religious centre, which was the temple at Jerusalem; also in appointing priests who were not of the tribe of Levi; in establishing a religious feast out of his own head, and above all in setting up two golden calves, one in the shrine at Bethel in the south, the other in the shrine in Dan far in the north, as idols for the nation to worship. This judgment of the Bible occasions some real difficulty, as far as the last and most serious item of the censure is concerned. If we are to believe that the ten tribes worshipped these golden calves, how are we to escape saying that the prophet Elisha countenanced this worship? Neither Elijah nor Elisha are spoken of as protesting against it; but Elijah was hostile to all the kings of Israel in his own day; his principal contest was indeed against the worshippers of Baal, but he need not be supposed to have approved of the worship carried on at Bethel and at Dan. But Elisha, though hostile to Joram the son of Ahab, had actually a great share in bringing about the successful revolt of Jehu against Joram; he was evidently friendly to the kings of the line



of Jehu, and one of them, Joash, came to see him when he was lying on his death-bed. The last words of Elisha to Joash were words prophesying the victory of Joash over the Syrians; and yet, if Joash were sinning deeply in the matter of the golden calves, was not the occasion one on which Elisha was bound to call his attention to that sin? But Elisha does not, either then or on any other occasion, breathe a word against it. Can we think that Elisha approved of idol-worship?

I do not think so, though Gideon, a few centuries earlier, appears to have represented Jehovah under the form of an idol; this is not indeed directly asserted in the passage I refer to (Judges viii. 27) but seems to be implied. And certainly the tribe of Dan in the very north of Canaan worshipped Jehovah under the form of an idol, quite independently of the golden calf set up there by Jeroboam: this is apparent from the narrative in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Judges. It is possible, however, that this particular idol was abolished in the days of Samuel, after the ruin of the sanctuary at Shiloh; this may be implied by the last words of the chapters I refer to. Speaking generally, the Israelites who followed the genuine Mosaic tradition were not idolaters. But it is probable that what is called satirically a calf was really a cherub, in the sense in which that word is used in connexion with the ark of the covenant, and with Solomon's temple. There was a cherub, with wings outspread, at each end of the sacred ark; and much larger cherubim overshadowed the ark in Solomon's temple. The cherubim symbolised the divine power, and were partly personified as God's messengers; and this, it can hardly be doubted, was the way in which the northern tribes thought of the figures which are called calves, but which were probably cherubim, set up by Jeroboam at Bethel and at Dan. It is true that the single cherub which (in spite of the plural form "calves" used in Hosea x. 5) was set up in each of the northern sanctuaries, was more likely to be worshipped as an idol than the pair of cherubim placed on the sacred ark; but in view of the attitude of Elisha (and to a lesser extent of Elijah too), the preferable opinion seems to be that it was not an idol to be worshipped. However it gave a handle to this suspicion, which the prophets and historians of Judah were not slow to take advantage of.

I think we ought to acquit Jeroboam of consciously intending to introduce idolatry into Israel; but we cannot acquit him of light-mindedness in his religious measures. Though religion is a spiritual matter, and though the material forms with which it

is connected may for good cause be changed, they ought not to be changed without some remembrance of the spiritual associations which have clung about that which is being abandoned. It may have been necessary for Jeroboam to build new shrines; but at least he ought to have shown that, in doing this, he did not intend any dishonour to the great shrine at Jerusalem, which had been built when the unity and the power of the tribes of Israel were at their zenith, and when the emotion of the whole people was most ardently kindled. Neither ought he, if possible, to have established an entirely new priesthood; if he could not help this, the justification for it ought to have been deliberately pronounced, and if possible recorded. Nor does there seem any just cause why he should have ordained a new feast for the ten tribes; at any rate, we know of no just cause for this. There is much that we do not know; but Jeroboam does appear to have treated the forms of religion as matters dependent on his arbitrary will and pleasure; and a religion so organised has no independent authority, and little power therefore of strengthening a dynasty. This was no slight weakness to the whole of northern Israel in subsequent years.

Yet as far as material success goes, the ten tribes probably thought at first that they had lost but little by relinquishing the rocky fastnesses of Judæa to the tribe which held fast its allegiance to the Davidic line. Not only by far the largest part of Palestine, but also the only fertile parts, lay in the north, and it is probable that the comparative population of the northern and southern kingdoms was far more unequal than would be inferred either from the census of warriors in 2 Samuel xxiv. where the proportion is put as eight to five, or from the report of the same census in 1 Chronicles xxi. where the proportion is given (approximately) as eleven to five. However this may be, the ten tribes were well satisfied with themselves; and when king Ahab, sixty or seventy years after the separation, married the daughter of the king of Sidon, and was subsequently victorious over the Syrians, and then formed a league with Jehoshaphat king of Judah, it might almost seem as if the great days of David and Solomon were about to return again. But Ahab and his dynasty suffered shipwreck; and the cause lay in religion.

As far as we can tell, the history of the matter is as follows. Though the Canaanite worship of the Baalim had never died out in northern Israel, it had been carried on in country places and with no great show. But when Jezebel, the daughter of the king



of Sidon, arrived at Samaria as the wife of king Ahab, she demanded a temple of Baal of quite different magnitude and splendour from those rustic shrines; and Ahab built it for her, and assigned to it a ministry of priests of Baal suitable to the edifice. This was perhaps no more than Solomon had done for his wives; but Ahab had neither the strong character nor the prestige of Solomon. The next thing that we hear in relation to the religion of northern Israel is that Jezebel slew all the prophets of Jehovah on whom she could lay her hands. But it is quite clear that Jezebel, imperious woman though she was, would never have ventured to do this if no provocation had been offered her. The prophets must have protested against the erection of so magnificent a temple to Baal, and against the worship which Ahab, it is said, paid to that deity; and their references to Jezebel are likely to have made her furious. Without saying that the prophets were altogether right, the evidence before us is that Jezebel began the war of bloodshed; to which Ahab weakly consented. For Ahab, though unscrupulous, was of himself by no means adverse to the prophets, and had some attached to his own court, who were of course safe from Jezebel; and even the prophets of the wild country parts would have been safe, had Ahab alone been concerned; but Jezebel was too strong for him.

The conflict which ensued was between Jezebel and the prophets. We have no reason to say that Jezebel desired to uproot the worship of Jehovah in itself; and conversely, the prophets would not have inveighed against Jezebel, if she had been contented with a private chapel in the royal palace, in which she could herself perform her devotions to Baal. But when Jezebel, by the publicity and splendour of the worship which she rendered to Baal, made Baal appear as a rival to Jehovah, this was what the prophets could not endure; and their indignation was increased by the fact that Ahab joined his queen in worshipping Baal. Hence the strife, to which Jezebel gave extreme bitterness by killing as many of her opponents as fell within her grasp.

But against Jezebel there now rose, as the champion of the prophets, one of the most famous of the characters who come before us in the Old Testament—Elijah the Tishbite—whose home was in Gilead, the hilly country lying east of Jordan. We have no continuous knowledge of his career; he is seen but by flashes; but evidently his influence was as long continued as it was great. It is true, indeed, that there was a tendency in later

ages to regard him as greater than he really was. He did no work comparable to the work of Moses; he had no such mighty design to carry out as the deliverance of a people from bondage; neither had he that intellectual range which enabled Moses to compress the cardinal points of morality within the compass of the ten commandments. He is rather to be compared to Samuel; a man of great faithfulness and practical power, having a true sense of the mission of Israel to the world, but retaining the warlike instincts which Moses had kindled in the people of Israel, and unaware of the force which lay in that fervent inspired preaching which was so abundantly employed by the prophets of Judah afterwards. Elijah was indeed vigorous in word as well as in deed; but he did not know the full force of the spoken word.

It cannot be doubted that the great fame of Elijah in the after generations of Israel, and among Christians too, has been due to the splendour of the miraculous narratives with which he is associated in the Biblical pages. In the whole Bible, there is no miracle told with such extraordinary descriptive power and such a feeling for the great issues involved as is the miraculous sacrifice said to have been offered by Elijah on Mount Carmel in the presence of the people of Israel; of "the people," it is said simply; a great multitude are clearly intended. Scarcely less powerful is the narrative of his subsequent flight to Mount Horeb, and of his colloquy with God on that mountain; and the narrative of his final ascension to heaven on a chariot of fire makes a worthy third to the other two chapters. But are these chapters, with all the power of their style, convincing as to the reality of the miracles described?

Let it be remembered that, while the narratives belong to northern Israel (and Mount Carmel especially was in the north of northern Israel), the Biblical historian belonged to southern Israel, and wrote three or four centuries after the date at which the miracles are supposed to have been wrought; and moreover that he never tells us on what authority he relies, or by what channel the narratives were brought from northern to southern Israel. Bearing this in mind, let us pay attention to the details of the story in 1 Kings xviii. and xix. Elijah, in spite of the extraordinary miracle worked by God on his behalf, in sending down fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice (after the priests of Baal had attempted a similar wonder in vain), does not dare to face Jezebel, but flees far away, so as to be out of her reach. When at last he arrives at Mount Horeb, he hears the "still small voice"



of God speaking to him at the entrance of the cave where he had taken refuge: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" The words are of the nature of a challenge; and Elijah defends himself. His answer, if we could forget the previous narrative, is touching. But how does it look when put side by side with the story of the miraculous sacrifice?

I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 1 Kings xix. 14.

Now it was only just before that Elijah, with the help of these same children of Israel, had slain four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, after the sacrifice on Mount Carmel. That the four hundred prophets of the Asherah were slain too, is not said; but we can hardly suppose, in view of the statement that they "eat at Jezebel's table," that they got off scot-free. Is it not plain that Elijah had a large number of allies, quite apart from the help given him by God? How then can he represent himself in the above passage as solitary, without allies? How can he, who had just performed such a sweeping act of persecution, complain of being persecuted? Is it not plain that, while the eighteenth chapter and the nineteenth chapter of the first book of Kings are separately very impressive, they do not tally together? It may be said, perhaps, that the people of Israel were very fitful in their beliefs and actions, and that while one day they might, at the bidding of Elijah, slay four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, they might the next day be ready to slay Elijah himself. That is possible, no doubt, but such a change of mood requires explanation; and not only is no explanation given, but according to the narrative Elijah does not make the smallest attempt to confirm the Israelites in their zeal for Jehovah, of which so remarkable an evidence had just been given. He simply abandons them and runs away. Had God's miraculous power ceased on his behalf?

It is clear that the history is confused and inaccurate; and indeed it has in a high degree the characteristics not of history, but of poetry. The material facts are transmuted; and this being the case, the literal truth cannot be recovered with certainty. But yet something may be discerned behind the written narrative.

That Elijah was a real character we cannot doubt; and if, after a victory over the priests of Baal (with a good deal of popular support behind him), he slew some of them, but afterwards fled in fear of Jezebel's wrath and of Ahab's soldiers, we must not

accuse him of cowardice. No one is bound to stand and be killed, unless some good comes of his standing and being killed. Elijah was engaged in actual, positive, and most bitter warfare; to wage that warfare not by word only, but by the bloody arbitrement of fight, was the best thing he knew to do; not the best absolutely, but the best within the range of his vision; he accepted this bloody warfare, though materially speaking he was the weaker side. In the course of this warfare he was compelled to fly, and his courage must not be impeached for so doing. That he went to Horeb is probable; the "mount of God," the first sanctuary of all Israel; he knew no special sanctity in Jerusalem; he went to the spot where God had first given laws to his people. There he listened to the "still small voice" of God, but not in the mood of one who desires peace, nor was it the words of peace which he heard the divine voice saying:

Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

No doubt these words are tinged with the knowledge which the historian of the book of Kings had of what happened afterwards; but they rest, it is probable, on a true basis, in the representation which they give of the mind of Elijah, and of the way in which Elijah interpreted the divine message to himself. Immitigable war lies in them; not only Ahab and Jezebel, but the faithless people of Israel must be chastised.

Elijah then was prophet and warrior; inspired by God, yet having the passions of man; capable of acts of love, yet stern in blood-shedding also, when he had before him those whom he regarded as the enemies of God; bearing in his soul, as the guide to duty, the great memories of the Exodus, but not recognising allegiance to the memories of David or of Solomon. It is possible that he had somewhat less tendency to localise the Deity than the prophets of Judah who came after him, with their strong tendency to idealise Jerusalem as the city of God; but on the whole he was not their equal. Isaiah and his compeers and successors had a higher function than Elijah; they threw themselves forward into the future in a way in which he did not; and their feelings



respecting the duties of man to man had a delicacy which we can hardly ascribe to Elijah (though we may remember Elijah's reproof of Ahab after the judicial murder of Naboth). He strove to bring the Israel of his own age into righteousness; but the prophets of Judah, like sowers of seed, implanted in the world a development that was to come; and theirs was the greater office.

The war which Elijah had initiated (or it would be more correct to say accepted after Jezebel's murderous action) was handed down by him to his successor Elisha; not so great a man as Elijah, but still not to be forgotten. It is probable that Elijah felt, when he made Elisha his successor, that his own death was not very far off. Before however Elijah died, Ahab was slain in battle with the Syrians; if we could trust the Biblical historian, we should say that Ahab's behaviour in battle was not very valiant; but there is something not quite probable in the act of cowardice imputed to him. Not long after Ahab's death, Elijah departed from this visible scene; borne to heaven, the Bible tells us, on a chariot of fire, drawn by horses of fire, and swept upwards by a whirlwind; but a more ordinary death and burial will not deprive him of his spiritual honour.

It is evident that Jezebel's power in northern Israel was too great to be easily overthrown; for she retained it during the two years' reign of her son Ahaziah, and during twelve years of the reign of her son Joram. But then came war with the Syrians, and Joram was wounded in battle, and returned to the royal palace at Jezreel to be cured. Now was Elisha's opportunity. He sent a messenger ("one of the sons of the prophets") to anoint Jehu as king, and to bid him execute judgment on the whole house of Ahab, every male descendant of whom was to be slain, and Jezebel herself with them. The messenger, after delivering this message, was to await no questioning, but to open the door, and flee with speed. Eminently suited to the occasion was such a procedure; and it was entirely successful. The message was delivered (the full purport of it was no doubt dictated by Elisha, though only a summary of it is put into his mouth); and Jehu was a man to whom it was welcome; it needed but this stimulus to stir him to action. Acclaimed as king by his companions, he drove in a chariot to Jezreel, a small company of horsemen attending him; slew Joram, who had come unsuspectingly to meet him; slew Ahaziah king of Judah, who had come to visit Joram; and then slew Jezebel. But slaughter could not end

there; Jehu must not only attain, but secure to himself the throne; hence all Ahab's sons were slain, and all his conspicuous friends. Lastly, Jehu summoned together all the worshippers of Baal in the neighbourhood of Samaria, professing himself a devoted worshipper of that deity; and having allured them into Baal's sanctuary, treacherously slew them. The sanctuary of Baal itself he destroyed utterly.

The writer of the books of Kings cordially approves of these deeds. But the prophet Hosea, writing perhaps seventy years after the fact, did not approve of them. He speaks in the name of Jehovah: "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease."

In this divergence of our Biblical authorities we may see the gradual rise of a purer morality out of the crude and bloody methods employed in the early ages of dawning civilisation. It was not only king Jehu, but Elisha also, who was responsible for the bloodshed and treachery of which I have just given an account; and Elijah would no doubt have sanctioned it. But Hosea was a tender soul; and though he was quite as adverse as Elijah and Elisha to the worship of Baal, his method of attacking it was the truly divine method of spiritual persuasion, and this is in the end the only victorious method. He was thus in advance, not only of Elijah and Elisha, but also of the Jewish historian who wrote the books of Kings.

Recognising this, we must still not be too severe upon Elijah and Elisha, or upon our Biblical historians. How few of us can raise ourselves wholly above the wrong methods and habits accepted in the world around us! It is indeed the office of a prophet so to raise himself, and to raise his fellows also; but even a prophet cannot do this easily, or with perfect consistency. Elijah and Elisha had the impress of Moses upon them; they had his faithfulness, his courage, his spirituality; but also, like him, they assumed that war and bloodshed were fit weapons to employ in a combat which is essentially spiritual. Long indeed was it before Israel, long was it before Christendom, fully outgrew that erroneous temper and principle. But we should remember that, as Moses was impelled towards the conquest of Canaan by the sheer need and poverty of his own people, which is a motive (whatever we may think of it) not due to religion at all; so also it could not be expected or desired that Elijah or Elisha should sit down quietly after the massacre of the prophets of Jehovah by



Jezebel, or should altogether abandon the methods of material force, perhaps in punishing such a crime, certainly in providing against its repetition. Brutal as the methods of Jehu were, some action was needed on the side which he espoused.

That which was permanent in the influence of Elijah and Elisha was their fervid, their exalted temper; and especially is this true of Elijah. He, a person with no advantages of station and no practice in warfare, ventured to measure himself against a king and an imperious queen, resisting them, rebuking them, defying them; and though not wholly right in his principles or his methods, yet animated by a sincere love of justice, and trusting in God's support. He gave a fresh link to a great tradition; and though prophecy did not long remain a power in northern Israel (perhaps because of the intermingling of warlike force with the legitimate prophetic stimulus) yet the fire of Elijah reached into southern Israel, and we may believe that it kindled the genius of the prophets of Judah.

For it was in the poor despised kingdom of Judah that the purity of prophecy had its origin. There it was that the highest thought of Abraham, the thought of the future blessedness of all mankind, so long forgotten amid the external wars and internal agonies of Israel, sent out new and living shoots, and was strengthened by the divine strength, so that it might in the end become a universal principle, a fruitful hope for all. The prophets whose writings we read in our Bibles all lived in southern Israel; for though Jonah lived in northern Israel, the book of Jonah is not a book written by Jonah, but a book written about Jonah. Hosea and Amos are sometimes supposed to be prophets whose home was among the ten tribes; but those who take note of that verse in Hosea where he prophesies that "the children of Israel shall return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king" (iii. 5), will see that he must have belonged to the tribe of Judah; a northern Israelite would not have looked back on David with such affection. Neither, it is probable, would a northern Israelite have looked with such scorn on the worship carried on at Bethel (which he styles satirically "Beth-aven," the house of nothingness); and the disparaging tone towards sacrifices in Hosea is exactly what we find afterwards in Isaiah and Micah and Jeremiah. As to Amos, he was among the herdmen in Tekoa, and Tekoa was in Judah, not in northern Israel. The main theme of these two prophets is the unworthiness of northern Israel, but partly the unworthiness of Judah too; threatenings are most frequent,

but more consolatory passages are not absent, especially in Hosea.

To Judah therefore, as henceforth the kernel of the religious power of the race of Israel, we must now return. It is not necessary to suppose that the religion of northern Israel was henceforth barren; but there is little trace of its active power. To the great spirits of Judah, on the other hand, may most truly be applied that unrivalled expression of our great poet—

the prophetic soul  
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come.

The word of preaching, the word of warning, the word of promise, in them became government and rule. It was the exhibition of lines of truth, which if men deserted, they would suffer for it; but to which if they adhered, the result would be a prosperity and glory that would never cease. The very weakness of the kingdom of Judah was a help to the new method of rule. Never, since the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were the highest spirits among men so little exposed to the temptation of using material force crudely and harshly in aid of their conceptions; and at the same time the moral feelings of the race of Israel had become more tender and of more penetrating perspicacity than in the days of those earlier patriarchs.

The very tragedies and sufferings of the world became a witness of the new era that had commenced. Hosea and Amos—to recur to the two earliest of these prophets—make the air ring with the sound of weeping, of indignation at the wrong-doings which they saw, and at the same time with the sound of love and tenderness, of exalted hope in the future, of confidence in God, that he would restore good out of the abundance of evil. These two prophets lived, as far as their writings tell us, before any hostility had appeared on the part of Assyria towards Israel. Indeed, Israel in the time of Jehu paid tribute to Assyria, as we learn from the inscriptions (see Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, pp. 356 and 357 of the abridged edition); and from various passages in Hosea we see that the ten tribes had a tendency to lean on Assyria for help. Syria, having its capital at Damascus, was at this time the chief rival and enemy of Israel. But when the house of Jehu had passed away, this state of things altered. Almost immediately we find the kings of Assyria taking a hostile part; and in the reign of Pekah the son of Remaliah, northern Israel actually made an alliance with its old enemy Syria against the king of Assyria, and strove to draw Judah into the league. But Judah



refused to be drawn; and now we come to the great prophet Isaiah, whose bearing towards these political questions was peculiarly his own.

With Isaiah, Micah must be joined as his contemporary, probably as his follower; but Isaiah has a mysterious power far transcending that of Micah. Yet Micah is a noble prophet too, and in him, as in all these prophets, communion with God is natural; a fountain springing up spontaneously and meeting the eternal divine nature which reinforces it. To be just and merciful and devoid of arrogance is the desire of his soul, and in comparison with this all ceremonial acts of worship are as nothing. The ideal of a just king who should rule in Israel, an ideal already shadowed out in Hosea and Amos, is seen in Micah also; and this king, as in Hosea and Amos, shall be mysteriously like David; for Bethlehem is indicated as his birthplace. It is said of him also that "his goings forth are from of old, from ancient days"; and in this phrase something divine is no doubt intended. Whoever he be, this hero with his comrades shall deliver Israel from the Assyrian, and shall bring peace (shall *be* peace, is the actual phrase). Israel, under him, shall at once be the conqueror of the earth, and a blessing to the earth. The unworthiness of the actual Israel, as Micah beholds it, is set in contrast with the Israel that shall be, when God has "cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

These are memorable conceptions; and yet the conceptions of Isaiah are far more memorable. Let me at once say, when I speak of Isaiah, what writings those are which I regard as really his work. The book which goes by his name contains sixty-six chapters; of which chapters the last twenty-seven are shown by their contents to belong to an era far later than Isaiah; their author was a prophet equal to Isaiah in the truth and dignity of his thoughts, but a quite different person nevertheless. On the other hand, the first twelve chapters of the book may fairly be assumed to be the work of the true Isaiah; not that, in so ancient a work, we can be confident of the genuineness of every expression, but on the whole Isaiah is no doubt the author of these early chapters. As to the chapters between the twelfth and the fortieth, some of these are probably by Isaiah, as for instance the twenty-second, and the series between the twenty-eighth and thirty-third inclusive; but it is not worth my while to enter into this question minutely.

Let me now speak of the chapters which I have noted as the

genuine work of Isaiah. The general bearing of these chapters is, as in the prophets of whom I have just been speaking, reproof of the present sins of Israel, and a prophecy of the future glory of Israel. These themes are mingled in unexpected ways; and a comparison of the close of the fifth chapter with the ninth chapter and with the beginning of the tenth chapter will show that there has been some misplacement of parts; the fifth chapter, or part of it, should be connected with the passage beginning with the eighth verse of the ninth chapter.

The style is exceedingly stately; but that which most distinguishes Isaiah from all the contemporary prophets is the deep intermingling of his own personality with what he writes, and also a certain definiteness in his manner of conceiving the future. Both these points receive illustration from his sixth chapter, which I will quote in its entirety:

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is Jehovah<sup>1</sup> Sabaoth: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king, Jehovah Sabaoth. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and Jehovah have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. And if there be yet a tenth in it, it shall again be eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof.

The poetical imagery in this passage is obvious; but it is the underlying meaning that concerns us. It should be noted that Jehovah is spoken of as the king; though the earthly king is recognised by Isaiah, the heavenly king is still supreme over Israel. But next: the personality of the prophet is recognised as an element

<sup>1</sup> "Jehovah of hosts," generally translated "The Lord of hosts."



not to be forgotten, when God is seeking for a fit messenger to send. Isaiah knows himself to be a man of unclean lips; it is only when this uncleanness has been purged away in the heavenly vision that he dares to listen to the divine voice, and to be the messenger to report what that voice tells him. Even when he is purified, he is still only a messenger; he is not empowered to take command over the sinful people of Israel. Then comes the message, every word of which breathes scorn of that sinful people; they are not worthy to be ruled. To be deadened still more and to be cast away is the doom reserved for them; the land shall be made desolate, and not once only. It is only at the end of this sorrowful denunciation that a word of hope is allowed to enter in. The holy seed will still remain; and it is implied, though not definitely said, that out of this a new and nobler plant may grow. Such was the prospect of the future, divinely revealed to Isaiah in the year of king Uzziah's death; and to confirm the memory alike of the threatenings and the hope involved in it, he named his eldest son (born shortly afterwards, it is to be supposed) Shear-jashub; the meaning of which name is, "A remnant shall return." Return to what? For the answer to this question let us look to the twenty-first verse of the tenth chapter; the first two words of which verse are in the Hebrew those very same words, "Shear-jashub," which as a proper name indicate Isaiah's son. "A remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God." Hence, when Isaiah named his son Shear-jashub, he indicated his confident hope that a remnant of Israel would return to God.

Before Isaiah's second son was born, years had passed by; Jotham, the successor of king Uzziah, was dead; Ahaz, the son of Jotham, reigned over Judah; and Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel had joined with Rezin king of Syria in that alliance against Assyria which I mentioned above; and because Judah was unwilling to join their alliance, the confederate kings came up and besieged Jerusalem. The design was, if they could take that city, to dethrone Ahaz, and in his place to set up as king one who would help them in their enterprise; "the son of Tabeel," it is said. The tremor and perturbation of spirit which this invasion caused in king Ahaz and his people may well be conceived; "his heart was moved," says the Bible, "and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind." This is the situation to which the longest continuous prophecy uttered by Isaiah himself refers; it extends from the beginning

of the seventh chapter to the end of the fourth verse of the tenth chapter. On this passage I must now comment; the political situation, the character of Isaiah, and the highest hopes of the people of Israel, will all be illustrated by it.

We see from the sixth verse of the eighth chapter of Isaiah, where it is said that "this people rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son," that there was a strong feeling in Jerusalem in favour of yielding to the confederate kings, Rezin and Pekah, and joining them in their rebellion against Assyria. Their rebellion, I say; for it cannot be doubted that all these countries did at that time acknowledge a certain vassalage to the kings of Assyria. Ahaz has so far been a faithful vassal; but I must think that the seventh chapter of Isaiah shows that he was beginning to yield to the advisers of rebellion, and to accept the alliance that was being thrust upon him. This is not indeed explicitly stated; but the tenor of the passage implies that this was the case, and it is probable that it would be the case. In the end, Ahaz did not yield; and if I read the history rightly, this was due to the influence of Isaiah. But Isaiah's task was not an easy one.

While Ahaz and his people were shaking in their shoes (let me be allowed the familiar expression)—

Then said Jehovah unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field; and say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither let thine heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

Does not that look as if Ahaz was thinking of yielding to Rezin and Pekah? But Isaiah assures him that the confederacy "shall not stand"; and adds, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established," and then follows a famous prophecy:

And Jehovah spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I try Jehovah. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, the maiden shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (i.e. God-is-with-us). Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken.

That is to say, "the land whose two kings thou abhorrest," or in other words the joint territory of Syria and northern Israel,



shall in a very few years be made desolate. Plainly that is the upshot of the passage<sup>1</sup>; but our attention is attracted by the sign to which Isaiah is appealing. Who is this maiden, and who is her son that is to be born? "*The* maiden" it is, according to the natural sense of the Hebrew; not "*a* maiden"; from which one must gather that Isaiah knew whom he meant, though king Ahaz probably did not. Let us wait; perhaps we may hear more about her in what follows.

We must infer, though it is not explicitly said, that Ahaz showed incredulity as to the truth of this prophecy, this "sign" to which Isaiah appealed; and that Isaiah believed Ahaz still to be about to yield to Rezin and Pekah; for now the prophet turns upon Ahaz with vehement threatenings:

Jehovah shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria.

The rest of the seventh chapter is occupied with a vivid picture of the results of an Assyrian invasion (which would naturally follow if Ahaz joined Rezin and Pekah); and the eighth chapter resumes the theme, but in symbolic fashion: let me quote the first eight verses of this chapter:

And Jehovah said unto me, Take thee a great tablet, and write upon it in common characters, For Maher-shalal-hash-baz; and I will take unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said Jehovah unto me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz (i.e. Spoil speedeth, prey hasteth). For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria.

And Jehovah spake unto me yet again, saying, Forasmuch as this people hath refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the River, strong and many, even the king of Assyria and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and he shall sweep onward into Judah; he shall overflow and pass through; he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

Now what I am contending is, that the child mentioned in this last passage, from the eighth chapter, is the same as the child mentioned in the previous passage, from the seventh chapter. Consider the context. The theme of the two chapters is absolutely

<sup>1</sup> The words, "Butter and honey shall he eat," imply a straitness of means even in southern Israel; for their force is that the land shall be a land of pasture, without agriculture.

the same—the attack which is being made by Pekah and Rezin upon Ahaz and upon the people of Judah, and the imperative duty of Ahaz and of the people of Judah not to yield to that attack, or to join Pekah and Rezin in their rebellion against Assyria. In both chapters the child is used as a sign to warn Ahaz as to the course which, under these circumstances, he ought to pursue; in the seventh chapter the warning takes the form of a promise of divine help if Ahaz pursues the right course, in the eighth chapter the warning takes the form of a threatening of evil results if Ahaz persists in following the wrong course. Since the warning is in each case conveyed through the name given to the child, the name of the child differs in the two chapters; Immanuel he is named in the seventh chapter, Maher-shalal-hash-baz in the eighth chapter. But this is no proof that two different children are intended. For another instance in which the same child is designated by two different names simultaneously, I may refer to the second book of Samuel, chapter xii. verses 24 and 25:

And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon. And Jehovah loved him, and he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and he called his name Jedidiah, for Jehovah's sake.

The famous name of Solomon has quite expelled from the popular memory the name of Jedidiah; yet the authority for the latter name was the more august; and the two names designated the same child. So it is in these chapters of Isaiah; there was no wish on Isaiah's part that the very awkward-sounding name Maher-shalal-hash-baz should displace the name Immanuel, previously given to the child; but he had an urgent and terrible lesson to impart; and to impart that lesson, he gave for the moment another name to the child. Instead of making the sign to Ahaz and the people of Judah consist in the word which means "God is with us," he now, under the menace of nearer calamity, makes it consist in the word which means "Spoil speedeth, prey hasteth." The change in the prophet's mood is quite intelligible and the result of that change is quite intelligible also. If we want positive proof that the child is the same child in the two chapters, we shall find something which comes very near to positive proof in the prediction which, in each case, follows the giving of the name of the child. In the seventh chapter this prediction runs thus:

Before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken.



In the eighth chapter the prediction runs thus:

Before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria.

Clearly it is the same child who is intended in both these passages. Further, if we want a proof that Isaiah did not mean the name Immanuel to cease to be the true name of the child whom (for a particular purpose) he had named Maher-shalal-hash-baz, we shall find it in the last words of the quotation which I made from the eighth chapter:

"The stretching out of his wings" (or in other words the army of the Assyrian king) "shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel."

Immanuel is here spoken of as a child whom the readers of Isaiah will recognise, and therefore as a child then existing; and the same is also implied in the words which follow immediately afterwards:

"Make an uproar, O ye peoples," writes the prophet, "and ye shall be broken in pieces;... Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us."

The last four words, "God is with us," form in the Hebrew the name "Immanuel," and no one can doubt that they contain a reference to the child mentioned just before. Is it possible that we can think, as the Christian world has believed from the days when the first of our four gospels was composed till now, that when Isaiah appeals to "Immanuel" as a sign, he is appealing to a sign totally unknown and unthought of in his own day, a sign wholly unintelligible to those whom he is addressing, a sign not to be seen in the world until more than seven centuries had elapsed from the time when the prophet was speaking? Is it not the very office of a sign to be plain and intelligible? If so, "Immanuel" must have been a child existing there and then, visible to those whom Isaiah was addressing; and if so, when we look at all the passages that I have quoted above, he can have been none other than Isaiah's younger son, whom he had also called, for a particular purpose, Maher-shalal-hash-baz. But if any doubt can remain on the matter, it must be removed by the passage immediately succeeding the words last quoted. Here it is:

For Jehovah spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A conspiracy, concerning all whereof this people shall say, A conspiracy; neither

fear ye their fear, nor be in dread thereof. Jehovah Sabaoth, him shall ye sanctify; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble thereon, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

Bind thou up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. And I will wait for Jehovah, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. Isaiah viii. 11-18.

They are noble words. They are words meant to encourage and strengthen the people of Jerusalem and Judah in that day, in Isaiah's own day, against troubles which then were pressing upon them. How does Isaiah encourage them? By telling them to have faith in the Lord of hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth. Of that faith his children are the signs; and evidently he means to appeal to the names which he had given them. What were those names? "Shear-jashub," or "A remnant shall return," i.e. to God: and "Immanuel," or "God is with us." Those names are the names which Isaiah bids the people accept as signs. Would it be a tolerable interpretation to exclude "Immanuel," about whom so much has been said, from the signs here indicated by Isaiah? "Immanuel" is of all others the sign which Isaiah means to press most. "God is with us"; that is the thing which he most bids the people of Judah remember, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz" may be a sign too, but in an inferior degree, and not to the exclusion of Immanuel. Therefore the child Immanuel was one of those children of his own whom Isaiah speaks of as signs.

Who was Immanuel's mother? Not the same, of course, as the mother of Shear-jashub. She is the "maiden" of Isaiah vii. 14; the "prophetess" of Isaiah viii. 3. Whether the word "prophetess" is to be taken in its literal sense, or means "a prophet's wife," does not matter; in any case, the maiden became the prophet's wife at some time indicated early in the eighth chapter. If we followed the Authorised Version in the second verse of the eighth chapter, "I took unto me faithful witnesses to record," we should say that these faithful witnesses, Uriah and Zechariah, officiated in this way at the marriage ceremony. With the translation given in the Revised Version, "I will take faithful witnesses," it is more natural to suppose that Uriah and Zechariah were witnesses of the name Maher-shalal-hash-baz being given to the child after its birth; but this, as I have noted



above, was in addition to the name Immanuel. I believe both translations to be possible, and either meaning is a good one.

Let me return, for a moment, to the general history. We know from the second book of Kings that Ahaz in the end abstained from joining Pekah and Rezin, and remained faithful to the king of Assyria; indeed he called him in to his own help; and Pekah and Rezin were discomfited, and Rezin was slain. I do not say that this appeal to Assyria was recommended or countenanced by Isaiah; it is hardly in tenor with Isaiah's prophecy; but one cannot blame Ahaz for making such an appeal. However, in any case we must hold that Isaiah preserved Ahaz from the error of casting in his lot with Pekah and Rezin; and it is plain that upon this being accomplished, Isaiah breathed freely and joyously. The beginning of the ninth chapter is the evidence of this. Here again we have the son mentioned as a cause of exultation, and the exultation assumes a tone of victory unknown before. Few passages in the Bible are more familiar to the modern reader than the verses in which Isaiah celebrates the son lately born:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah Sabaoth shall perform this. ix. 6, 7.

But it may be asked: Is it possible that Isaiah celebrated the birth of his own son in such terms as these? We have been accustomed to think of some one much greater than a mere mortal as the hero thus prophetically foretold. It is incredible, it may be said, that Isaiah should have arrayed his own infant son with these majestic appellations; but if it were credible, should we not be obliged to call him an arrogant presumptuous man, a dreamer of vain dignities, such as neither could nor did come to any offspring whom he himself had begotten?

No; Isaiah was guilty of no arrogance in writing thus of his own son; his prophecy was indeed not fulfilled in the letter; but the spirit of it was immortal, and kindled the generations which came after him. It is necessary, in treating of these words, to remove one point of difficulty which at the outset bars the way to a proper understanding of them. It is said that if Isaiah thought of his own son as sitting on the throne of David, this (putting all other objections aside) was disloyalty to Ahaz, and

to the young son and future successor of Ahaz, Hezekiah. But the throne of David was not thought of by Isaiah as Ahaz might have thought of it, or as the ordinary inhabitant of Jerusalem might have thought of it. The throne of David, as Ahaz regarded it, rested on military force, of which but a scant measure was wielded by the people and king of Judah at that date. The throne of David, as Isaiah contemplated it, rested on the spirit of God, and was animated by a spiritual fire such as cannot help subduing all things to itself. Isaiah himself was the possessor of this spiritual fire, and by virtue of his possession of it he had cried, "Seal the teaching among my disciples"; and he had said that though the house of Jacob was blind, he himself would wait steadfastly, if so be that he might look upon the face of Jehovah, the Everlasting God. In the vision of God rule should be perfected, and in the vision of God peace should be eternal and unsullied. That was the kind of government which Isaiah had in his heart, and it was too different from the government wielded by Ahaz to involve any risk of disloyalty to Ahaz.

But yet Isaiah did not think of this divine government as perfected in his own person. He had said originally, when brought before the Divine Presence, that he was "a man of unclean lips"; and though his iniquity had been purged, he did not yet think himself worthy to exercise such rule as he conceived in his heart. But his son might be worthy. If Isaiah's second wife was really a prophetess (and we are not forbidden to take that word literally), it may be that he thought that a double portion of the divine spirit would belong to one endowed with it on both the father's and the mother's side; but in any case he thought that the power of the divine oracles would rest upon the son who had just been born to him. He himself had delivered his own people from an imminent danger; might not his son do much more, and guide all Israel into everlasting peace? The heavenly light, as he saw it, was poured not only upon Judah, but upon the northern frontier of Israel, where in Galilee the chosen people mingled with the nations of the world. In this new dominion war should be a thing of the past. The warrior's armour and the garments rolled in blood should be fuel for fire and should pass away.

Such was the prophetic vision in which the ardour of Isaiah reached its highest point; and we must not think meanly of it because it was not literally fulfilled. We cannot suppose that either of the two sons of Isaiah played a part of great distinction in bringing God's spirit into the world; and Isaiah, as years



went on, must have discovered that this fulfilment of his words was not to be. But did he resign all hope of their essential fulfilment? Certainly he did not.

But I must hasten to the end of my present chapter; Isaiah is the greatest man who has been my theme in it, and I must make his work intelligible. He did not, he could not, speak to all his fellow-countrymen; he was too high above them, and they could not understand him; but he spoke to those who would listen. To these he gave the counsel to abstain from the vain controversies of earth; to trust in God, and rest. Doubtless he did not mean to advocate entire quiescence when the enemy was in the field; it was not the duty of self-defence that he disparaged; rather it was the feverish fear which corroded the hearts of the people of Judah, that he deprecated, and urged them to lay aside. That was his message.

Judah and Jerusalem were saved; but as to the northern kingdom, it needed but a few years for it to be swept away by the kings of Assyria, and many of its people were carried off to Assyria and Media, and men of alien race were planted in the lands of Samaria and Galilee. Yet we have reason to say that the religion of Jehovah never died out in those lands; weakened it was, and no great prophet or teacher henceforth is recorded as belonging to it; but still it survived, and had a history.

But Judah and Jerusalem had to bear another terrible assault in Isaiah's lifetime; this was from Sennacherib, the son of that king who was the last to join in the spoliation of northern Israel, Sargon. Sennacherib made his attack on Judah in Hezekiah's reign. Hezekiah had rebelled but had submitted; the degree of his submission however was not accepted by Sennacherib, who demanded that Jerusalem itself should be thrown open to his troops. That condition Hezekiah would not accept, and Isaiah supported him in his refusal. (What amount of justice there was in Hezekiah's original rebellion, or whether Isaiah supported him in that, we do not know.) So Sennacherib, who had already taken many cities of Judah, and had transported their inhabitants to eastern lands, now resolved to add Jerusalem to his captures. The story of his failure is too well known for me to repeat here; his army was destroyed by a pestilence; and he could not replace it by another. That no doubt is the historical fact which is clad in a miraculous guise by the Biblical writer<sup>1</sup>. The relief to the

<sup>1</sup> The *history* of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, and its result, are found in 2 Kings xviii. xix. and Isaiah xxxvi. xxxvii. The historian was not Isaiah; the prophecy attributed to Isaiah in these chapters is probably in part genuine.

people of Jerusalem was overpowering. There is no denying that Judæa had suffered terribly in the campaign; and the thoughts of the rescued nation could not be all of triumph. Yet to Isaiah it appeared, and justly, an occasion for recalling the great destinies of Israel. But before quoting his sublime utterance on this occasion, let me briefly explain the chronology of his writings in this part.

The famous passage at the beginning of his ninth chapter had been written in the midst of adversity, yet with inward exultation and hope; but the remainder of the ninth chapter, and the first four verses of the tenth, plainly refer to the fall of northern Israel, and are full of the terrors of that event. But the remainder of the tenth chapter refers to Sennacherib, and was probably written after his collapse. The eleventh chapter however is Isaiah's true hymn on this occasion—his prophetic hymn—and now I will quote it:

And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit: and the spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah; and his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion shall graze together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall be friends; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah xi. 1-9<sup>1</sup>.

I need not quote further; the theme of the remainder of the chapter is the reunion of the divided houses of Israel under "the root of Jesse," which shall stand "for an ensign" and for a meeting-place of all the nations, their rest and their hope.

Truly the prophet, in uttering these glowing words, did not "judge after the sight of his eyes"! What he saw with his eyes was the devastation of his country: Ephraim swept away, Judah in part swept away; and as to those who remained, were they not the same people to whom he had been sent in anger, to seal

<sup>1</sup> Two slight alterations in the reading and in the translation of this passage I have borrowed from Mr G. H. Box's *Book of Isaiah*.



their ears and close their eyes, lest they should see, and hear, and understand, and be healed? Yet he prophesied peace and glory in the future, and he prophesied truly. What more shall I say of him? Let me quote from him one more noble passage, prophesying the unity of the nations:

In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; for that Jehovah Sabaoth hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance. *Ibid.* xix. 24, 25.

And yet another, spoken in the name of Jehovah, inimitable in its scorn of religious formalists:

Their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been learned by rote. *Ibid.* xxix. 13.

Isaiah is one of the landmarks of history; the first who sketched the kingdom of God upon earth. Of his outward acts but little is recorded; but he breathes for all time the fragrance of an immortal hope.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE HEAVENLY IDEAL IN CONFLICT: JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL

IN Isaiah and in the prophets contemporary with him, but most of all in Isaiah, we see the return to a purity in the conception of the divine ideal such as there had not been since Abraham, and a higher morality than even Abraham had been able to conceive. Not that I am disparaging the great Israelites who intervened between Abraham and Isaiah, such as Moses and Samuel and David and Elijah; but all of these looked upon warfare and blood-shedding not only as legitimate, which in the difficult circumstances of life it sometimes is, but also as a divine method of action, when aimed against the enemies of God; and herein they were mistaken. Though this mistake was not formally repudiated by any of the prophets of the Old Testament, it lost its hold upon them; it is the sword of the spirit which the prophets use, not the sword of physical warfare.

Changes in religious conduct are not, however, to be accomplished with absolute suddenness; and a greater spirituality was not the only difference which now began to show itself between the Israel of the past and that Israel which in the reign of Hezekiah was sending out its first tender buds. Another tendency showed itself; the tendency to centralise religious worship, and to make it uniform. This was not naturally a tendency of the prophets; who, though they assumed as a matter of course a unity of spirit in religion, were elevated above a compulsory unity of outward worship. Still the prophets of Judah did regard with great affection the city of Jerusalem; the past history of Israel was dear to them, and the temple, and the sacred ark which had had so long and remarkable a history; so that to a certain extent the spirituality of the prophets did go hand in hand with centralisation in religion. The priests, in the reign of Hezekiah, were in alliance with the prophets; less spiritual, but more disposed to



centralisation; the prophets disapproved of the abundance of sacrifices carried on throughout the country because such worship was merely material, the priests, because it was apt to discard authority. Both prophet and priest contended against the Baal-worship, though this was not so prevalent in Judah as in northern Israel; it is only distantly referred to in Isaiah and Micah.

These tendencies of prophet and priest had no small influence on king Hezekiah himself, to whom we must ascribe the first serious attempt forcibly to centralise the religion of Israel; his proceedings are thus described in the second book of Kings (xviii. 4):

He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah: and he brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan (i.e. a piece of brass).

It is likely that Isaiah looked with some approval on these measures of king Hezekiah; but we do not know his precise attitude towards them. One cannot help thinking that Hezekiah's reforms went dangerously beyond the common sentiment of the people of Judah in his day; for in the next reign, the reign of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, a tremendous reaction took place, and idolatry was introduced into the kingdom of Judah to an extent never known before. The reformers of Hezekiah's time, who no doubt resisted this reaction to the utmost of their power, were swept away with great bloodshed; for we read that Manasseh "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (2 Kings xxi. 16). Tradition says that Isaiah was one of those so slain; but there is no certain record of this.

If the reign of Hezekiah had been one of external prosperity, his reforms would probably have endured without challenge. But the invasion of Sennacherib produced the greatest suffering in Judah, and weakness as well as suffering, and the religious policy of Hezekiah, it is plain, excited distrust in the mass of the people. Thus it befell that the reign of his successor Manasseh was what it was, a time of degradation, referred to afterwards with remorse and horror. Fifty-five years did Manasseh reign in Jerusalem. As to what was happening in those cities of Judah whose inhabitants had been swept away by Sennacherib, there is no record; probably the poorest of the people were left; and some restoration of inhabitants there must have been, for the

cities of Judah are not spoken of afterwards as a mere desolation, either in the second book of Kings or in the prophecies of Jeremiah. But all religious guidance had gone out of the land: not one single prophet is named as living and teaching during the whole of this long reign. Random idolatries, aimless superstitions, held by turns the indiscriminating minds of king, nobles, and people. The lofty encouragements of Isaiah dwelt in the minds of a few, but by the people at large they were absolutely forgotten.

We do not even know for certain one single event that happened during these fifty-five years. Long afterwards it was alleged, and the story is found in the second book of Chronicles, that Manasseh was captured by the king of Assyria, and taken in chains to Babylon, where under the pressure of calamity he is said to have repented of his polytheistic idolatry; and being presently restored to his kingdom, he is said to have abolished all his idols and the idolatrous altars. But it is impossible not to regard this story as a fable, invented for a purpose regarded as pious. We find the full flood of idolatry going on in the reign of Amon, the son and successor of Manasseh, and even in the early years of the reign of Josiah; and not the smallest hint is given of the previous abolition of idolatry by Manasseh, which would have necessitated a restoration of the idols which had been cast away. And how could the writer of the books of Kings have been ignorant of so striking a fact as the repentance of Manasseh, if it had really occurred? For it would have been an event not easily to be forgotten. If, again, we ask whether the Chronicler is a writer capable of romancing, it is difficult to deny this, in view of the immense victories which he attributes to the pious kings Abijah and Asa, and other narratives which will easily be discovered on a perusal of the books of Chronicles. Further, though it is no doubt possible that the king of Assyria, if he took Manasseh captive, should have located him in Babylon (which at that time was subject to Assyria), yet it is difficult not to think that the Chronicler is here naming Babylon as the capital of the Assyrian monarchy, which it never was. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian monarchy; but long before the books of Chronicles were written, Nineveh had been so utterly destroyed that only the faintest memory of it dwelt in the minds of men, and it is not once mentioned in the books of Chronicles. The Chronicler may very well have forgotten that there ever was such a city.

We may say then with some confidence that Manasseh never was taken captive, but lived out the whole of his impious life on



the throne which he had inherited. A strong-handed king he must have been to live so long in his dangerous position. But it is likely that he was popular with most of his subjects, whom he allowed to go their own ways in religious matters; and it would seem also that he took possession of much of the half-deserted land of northern Israel. At all events we find part of this land subject to his grandson Josiah; and if Josiah himself had subdued it, we should probably have been told of this. However this may be, the people of Judah showed no desire to overthrow Manasseh or his descendants; and when Amon, the son of Manasseh, was slain by his own servants, Josiah son of Amon quietly became king, a boy only eight years old.

Then the reformers took heart again. When I speak of the reformers, it must be understood that I mean those who, for more than a thousand years, had been cherishing the Abrahamic tradition; who had been keeping it separate, all along, from the religions of the nations round them; who had valued it in its historical aspect, as a true record of divine powers and promises; who had associated it with a morality in which the duties of man to man were recognised and set forth in detail. I do not claim for these, who were the nucleus of the race of Israel, perfect insight, or even perfect candour and truthfulness; their principles had the crudity of a barbarous age; and when they acquired power, they were guilty of persecuting acts which are to be regretted. But their aim was great, and seriously pursued; they had the conception of a righteous Power beyond the range of human sense, to whom our obedience is due; they strove to bring their fellow-countrymen, and indeed all nations, to the cognisance of this Power. While acknowledging their faults, we must not ignore the debt we owe them.

Outside the circle of these ardent souls, the people of Judah in the reign of Josiah were imbued with a religion of varying strictness or laxity. They had never ceased to regard Jehovah as the national God of Israel; but most of them thought that, if Jehovah failed them, they might as well have a second string to their bow in Baal, or Moloch, or the Sun-god. To the pure worshippers of Jehovah, to the believers in a righteous God, to the followers of the Mosaic tradition (which came from Abraham), this polytheism was abhorrent; but how were they to overcome it? The greatest single piece of evidence which they had, to prove the power and love of God, lay in the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian bondage; and to the exhibition of this event,

in words that might pierce and convince, many of them now devoted all their strength.

In the reign of Hezekiah, the people of Judah had not been so steeped in the practices of the surrounding nations as to give an acute stringency to the problem, how pure religion was to be recommended and enforced. But the reign of Manasseh had made it possible that the traditions of Abraham and Moses would absolutely die away, choked by the congeries of surrounding superstitions; and many deeply religious persons among the people of Judah, when the reign of Josiah gave them an opportunity of expressing themselves, felt the keenest stimulus towards giving such an account of the miracles of the Exodus and of Mount Sinai as should never be forgotten by God's chosen people. That the deliverance of Israel from Egypt had been achieved by miracles was not in that age denied or disputed; and it was inevitable that when the strong attempt was made, in the reign of Josiah, to bring back the people of Judah from idolatry and polytheism to the worship of Jehovah as the single unique Deity, great stress should be laid on these miracles.

I must relate immediately the attempt which was made on these lines; but meanwhile let it not be forgotten that a nobler argument than that of miracles was, even in that age, being offered to the people of Judah for the purpose of convincing and confirming them in the pure truth of religion. When the prophet Jeremiah sought to bring back his fellow-countrymen to the pure worship of God, he did indeed refer to the history of the Exodus; and it is likely that he believed in the miracles of the Exodus; but it is not from the point of view of the miracles that he makes his appeal. This is what he writes (Jeremiah ii. 4-7):

Hear ye the word of Jehovah, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus saith Jehovah, What unrighteousness have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither said they, Where is Jehovah that brought us up out of the land of Egypt; that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought and of the shadow of death, through a land that none passed through, and where no man dwelt? And I brought you into a plentiful land, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

It will be seen that, even if Jeremiah believed in the miracles, it is not the miracles as such that he trusts in; it is the love and goodness of God in which he trusts; this he felt as communicated to his own heart, and he urges others so to act that they may



feel it in their hearts. But this immediate intercourse with God, which belonged to the prophets of Israel, did not belong to the greater number of pious Israelites; it did not belong to Hilkiah the high priest, or Shaphan the scribe; and these adopted another method to bring about the reform they desired. How far Jeremiah sanctioned their proceedings we do not know; but his method was intrinsically different from theirs. Let me quote the narrative which will show how the priest and the statesman acted in furtherance of their scheme of reform; it will be found in 2 Kings xxii.:

And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of Jehovah, saying, Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the money which is brought into the house of Jehovah, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people: . . . And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen that have the oversight of the house of Jehovah. And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant saying, Go ye, inquire of Jehovah for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is enjoined us.

In the ninth chapter of this work I have argued, as others have argued before me, that the book thus found in the temple was not indeed the actual book of Deuteronomy as we have it now, but the first sketch of that book; mainly on the ground that the book of Deuteronomy stringently commands that centralisation of sacrificial worship, which king Josiah proceeded dutifully to enforce, and which therefore must have been contained in the book which Hilkiah found in the temple. No other book of the Pentateuch could have been the origin of this rigid enforcement; for though Leviticus xvii. 1-9, is in the same direction, it is not the same command. If then the first sketch of the book of Deuteronomy was the book thus found in the temple, can we help adding that it was a book which had been composed not so long before the date of its finding? No claim is made in the book

of Kings that it had ever been known before. It was found, but we are not told that it had been lost; yet if written by Moses, or if it were a transcript of what was written by Moses, it must have been lost before it was found. Could such a loss take place, and not the faintest mention of it occur in the history?

But I must not repeat arguments which have already been given with some fullness in the ninth chapter of the present work. It will be sufficient here to state the conclusion there reached: That the ardent worshippers of Jehovah, the ardent inheritors of the religious tradition of Abraham and Moses, after having been thrust down and overpowered in the half-heathen reign of Manasseh, gathered spirit and determination in the reign of Manasseh's grandson Josiah; and the most powerful of their weapons was the composition of a book, the first sketch of our book of Deuteronomy; a book truly powerful; sincerely written then, though our more enlightened conscience would not permit us to write a similar work now.

But now let me continue my last quotation, so as to show the precise result of the finding of the book. It will be remembered that king Josiah had commanded Hilkiah the high priest and his friends to "inquire" of Jehovah, as to what, in view of the discovery of the sacred book, they should think and do.

So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the second quarter;) and they communed with her. And she said unto them, This saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and it shall not be quenched. But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Jehovah, thus shall ye say to him. Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: As touching the words which thou hast heard, because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before Jehovah, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith Jehovah. Therefore, behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

The narrative goes on to tell how Josiah, after hearing the message of the prophetess Huldah, summoned all the elders



throughout Judah and Jerusalem to a great conference in the temple; and with the elders came the prophets and "all the people," we are told; and then standing before them, he himself read to them the whole book just found, now called "the book of the covenant"; and after reading it made a solemn vow (a "covenant," it is called) to obey the words of that book; and the people gave their consent and adhesion to his vow. The consent of the people proved far from immutable; but Josiah himself was firm in his resolve, and vigorous in his action. He sent and destroyed all the "high places," or in other words all the shrines, throughout Judæa and Samaria, whether those dedicated to Jehovah, or those dedicated to Baal or other deities; the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem being alone permitted to stand, the single and unique shrine of the only true God. Out of the temple at Jerusalem itself he took every image, every vessel, that had been used for worship other than the worship of Jehovah; all such images and vessels he destroyed utterly. As regards the priests who had ministered at the altars which he destroyed, he drew a distinction; he slew the priests who had been engaged in false and idolatrous worship, but spared, and did not in any way punish, those who had been engaged in the worship of Jehovah; though sacrificial worship was for the future forbidden in all the country shrines equally.

Such, as it is recorded for us, was the reform of religion carried out by king Josiah; and a very drastic reform it was; nor must we defend every part of it. Circumstances yet to be narrated made it short lived, and the book which was the immediate cause of it, the book of Deuteronomy, proved a more important influence upon mankind in after generations than anything which king Josiah did personally.

For now we have, in its first beginning, that long-lived and powerful agency, the religion of the *book*! Never before, in the history of mankind, had the written word so vast and detailed an influence as it now began to have over the minds of Israelites, and through them on Christians and Mohammedans afterwards. In the reign of Josiah the power of the book was but in its infancy; but it is a reality; the written word is beginning to rival the spoken word; and it is a rivalry which extends to the thoughts of men as well as to their actions. The book of Deuteronomy is the first book of all books that were ever written in which this all-comprehensive claim to rule men was advanced; and this being so, it will be well to give some further account of its moral bearings

than is involved in what is written above. It is permissible to treat it as a whole; though in its actual form a good deal is later than the reign of Josiah, and some of it is earlier (but gathered into the whole, of course, at a later time).

The book of Deuteronomy is, as I have said, most earnest; and in spite of the fact that imagination entered largely into the composition of many parts of it, it comes from the heart. More than that; it is a book in which the duties of humanity and justice are set forth in memorable terms. It will be well to quote a few passages to show this. The duty of impartial judgment between man and man is set forth as follows:

Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, according to thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons: neither shalt thou take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee. Deut. xvi. 18-20.

The duty of kindness towards aliens is inculcated, sometimes very impressively, as for instance in the tenth chapter, verse 19:

Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

And so again in chapter xxiv. 14, 15, with reference to the payment of hired servants:

Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: in his day shalt thou give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto Jehovah, and it be sin unto thee.

The verse which immediately follows the foregoing is one that may have belonged to a more ancient code; for the Bible represents a saying to the same effect as having influenced Amaziah, some two centuries before Josiah:

The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

Such sayings are memorable; and more might be quoted. Yet in reading the book of Deuteronomy, we have continually to change from admiration to regret; for, with all its fervour and dignity, it represents a severer and more painful view of God's judgments than any other book of the Old Testament contains; and this was in no slight degree the cause of the narrowness of



the later Judaism, from Ezra onwards. For while the religion of the book, if embraced without freedom to criticise, tends of itself to narrowness, this tendency is greatly increased when the punishments for disobedience or incredulity are made too severe. It is not disparaging Deuteronomy very much to say that it is not equal in prophetic power to the utterances of Isaiah; but it is instructive to compare the way in which the two books speak of the fear of God. The passage of Isaiah in which this fear is inculcated as a right and noble quality is from the eleventh chapter, a part of which I quoted in treating of Isaiah; but a few verses may well be quoted again:

And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit: and the spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah; and his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah....

Now take in contrast with this the following passage from the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, in which hypothetical blessings and hypothetical cursings, correspondent to the good or bad actions of the Israelites of the future, are set down (but the cursings exceed the blessings in length many times over); among the blessings the fear of God is not mentioned, but among the cursings it enters in thus (verses 58 and 59):

If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, Jehovah thy God; then Jehovah will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.

How tender is the fear of God in Isaiah, how terrible in Deuteronomy! No doubt the people of Judah had gone very wrong in the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, and something more of severity might be expected from the writer of Deuteronomy, living after that great apostasy, than from Isaiah, who lived when the worship of foreign deities was comparatively moderate; but this is not enough to account for the difference between the two passages. There is something external and mechanical in the spirit which the writer of Deuteronomy is inculcating; it is not the noble fear of wrong-doing, but the less noble fear of the pains which may be expected to result from wrong-doing, which he is making the instrument of his appeal to his own nation. Not that the fear of painful results is in itself ignoble; but it becomes ignoble, if not subordinated to the fear of wrong-doing in itself; for it is by

the fear of wrong-doing, not by the fear of punishment, that the human spirit grows vitally. Now in the whole of the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, with its long array of blessings and cursings, no touch of the nobler fear is inculcated. I will not say that it is absent from the whole book of Deuteronomy, for the relations between God and man are assumed to be intimate and loving in any right order of things, and the noble fear of God cannot be absent from such a temper; the twenty-eighth chapter is specifically faulty in a degree in which the others are not so. But all through the book, the thought of external penalties inflicted by God directly, or commanded by God as a duty to be carried out by his faithful servants upon impious men, is very prominent indeed; and the fear of such penalties is earthly, not spiritual. There is an element of hardness in Deuteronomy, which is rarely found in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament; and this was not without injurious effects in after ages.

In speaking of Deuteronomy as the first instance, and indeed the origin, of the "religion of the book," I do not forget that for some centuries before the reign of king Josiah there had been written narratives, more or less detailed, of the rise and growth of the people of Israel, and of the divine element pervading their history, as the divine element was then understood. But none of these narratives had the insistent force which compels obedience. Up to the reign of Josiah, the religion of Israel, even in its most orthodox form, was fluid and capable of change. We read in Numbers xxvii. 21, a divine command that Joshua, when in need of guidance, should receive it from the high priest, who should consult God by means of the Urim and Thummim (by which name the jewels on the breastplate of the high priest were designated). It is evidently intended that this was to be the method by which the chiefs of the Israelites should always obtain the divine counsel; and no doubt the practice was an ancient one, and was really resorted to by David. Yet king Josiah, and the high priest Hilkiah, quite ignore it; and, being in need of guidance, consult the prophetess Huldah. This was a more enlightened procedure than consulting the Urim and Thummim; but it was a procedure that ignored the ancient practice. If such high authorities as king Josiah and the high priest Hilkiah could to this extent ignore tradition (and it matters little whether the tradition had been actually written down or not), it is clear that the religion of Israel was not, up to the reign of Josiah, an absolutely fixed set of ordinances. But Deuteronomy, with its stern commands, tended



to fix ceremonial religion; and authority in the formal sense began to assume a definiteness which it had not before.

Yet this tendency towards fixity, this formalising of authority among religious Israelites, almost immediately received a serious check, and appeared likely to be cut short almost as soon as it began. The gallant king Josiah, whom (in spite of his persecuting tendencies) we must honour for his piety and courage, and also according to the testimony of Jeremiah for his justice, was slain after a reign of thirty-one years in a hopeless attempt to withstand Pharaoh-necoh king of Egypt, who was marching by the usual route through the north of Palestine to attack the Assyrians. For the moment, the whole Judæan monarchy fell under the power of Egypt. The power of Egypt was short lived; but Josiah had gone; and there was no real recovery for his family or his dynasty. To explain what was happening, it is necessary to glance beyond the bounds of the land of Israel.

The great kingdom of Assyria, the kingdom whose capital was Nineveh, which had subjugated Syria, northern Israel, and Babylon, and under Sennacherib had desolated Judah, was now tottering to its fall. A terrible, an astonishing event! How came it about? The most recent discoveries in the cuneiform inscriptions show that Nineveh was destroyed by one of those formidable savage hordes, which have so often issued from central Asia and have destroyed the products of civilisation. The Greeks called them Scythians; but the inscription of Nabonidus through which we know of this particular horde calls them the Manda. Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon, and from his inscription it appears that the Babylonians rejoiced at the fall of Nineveh, and so far were in sympathy with the Manda; but whether they actively helped the Manda is uncertain. (Herodotus tells us that Nineveh was taken by the Medes; but he also informs us of the presence of a great Scythian army in Media and other parts of Asia at that time; and whatever precisely may have happened, it seems probable that the actual destruction of Nineveh was carried out by the Scythians, i.e. the Manda.)

It must strike one with awe that the single city on which this barbarian invasion struck with overwhelming force, was the city which, only a few years before, had been supreme over all western Asia; which had subjugated Babylon and Egypt; which had swept away a great part of the ten tribes from northern Palestine, and many of the people of Judah as well; which had transplanted other communities also, more than we now know; which in

splendour of external appearance was surpassed by few cities of the ancient world, as its remains now testify. Such was Nineveh; yet despite all its splendour and pride, not a single sigh or lament has reached us to show how the inhabitants of it felt its fall. We cannot but contrast with this the poignant laments which, when Jerusalem was destroyed, only a few years later, the exiled inhabitants of that city poured forth, and which we read to-day in our Bibles. Were not the Jews a nobler people than the Assyrians, because they could thus feel and utter their sorrows?

But at the moment when Pharaoh-necoh set out, thinking to seize some portion of the falling realm of Assyria, the people of Judah were by no means lamenting. The tone of the prophet Nahum, whose three chapters are entirely devoted to portraying the imminent fall of Nineveh, is the tone of unalloyed triumph. In his eyes, the fall of Nineveh is the peace of Judah.

"Jehovah hath given commandment concerning thee," he cries out to Nineveh, "that no more of thy name be sown; out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image; I will make thy grave; for thou art vile. Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows: for the wicked one shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off." Nahum i. 14, 15.

Alas, there were wicked ones still remaining in the earth, when Nineveh had been cut off; as Judah was very shortly to know. Another prophet, Zephaniah, with broader imagination and more generous mind than Nahum, yet speaks in similar terms about Nineveh:

"Jehovah," he writes, "will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like the wilderness. And herds shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the chapiters thereof: their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he hath laid bare the cedar work. This is the joyous city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none else beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand." Zephaniah ii. 13-15.

The theme of Zephaniah, however, is the purging of all the nations; out of calamities he predicts a happy end. Neither in Nahum nor in Zephaniah is there direct mention of the wild hordes that were then devastating western Asia: but it is from the knowledge of their presence and their acts of savage destruction that these prophecies evidently proceed.

One inference we may draw from the tone of these prophets



of Judah. It is a natural question, why Josiah went out, certainly in no prudent fashion, to oppose Pharaoh-necoh in his march against Assyria. Some have thought that he went as the vassal of Assyria, to oppose the enemy of Assyria. But if Josiah had acted from this motive, it is clear that he could have had neither Nahum nor Zephaniah for his counsellor; and we cannot doubt that Nahum and Zephaniah represented the general sentiments of the people of Judah. Hence we must think that Josiah opposed Pharaoh-necoh because he considered that the Egyptian king was violating the soil of Palestine; and the twentieth chapter of Deuteronomy, with its exhortations to courage, was very likely to stimulate him towards such resistance. He fell not unworthily; but the premisses on which he had acted were imperfect; and the kingdom of Judah suffered thereby.

Even if Josiah had been more prudent, it can hardly be doubted that the kingdom of Judah would have been obliged to submit to being the vassal, in some degree, of either Egypt or Babylon (Nineveh having perished, and the barbarian invasion having come to an end, in what precise manner we know not). But Josiah's defeat made things much worse for his country. Pharaoh-necoh began by insulting and despoiling the land of Judah; and when Pharaoh-necoh, a year or two later, was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar in the battle of Carchemish, then that great king claimed all the land of Israel as his own by right of conquest, and it is plain that Judah and Jerusalem suffered afresh, though we have no exact account of the first proceedings of Nebuchadnezzar against the hapless country. Out of all the competitors who strove for the imperial inheritance of Nineveh, Babylon had come out victorious; and the catastrophe of Jerusalem was drawing near.

We can hardly be surprised that, after the fall of Josiah, the land of Judah lapsed back into polytheism and idolatry. The religion of which Josiah had been so ardent a champion had not been justified by visible success; and idols and idol-worship began to revive in Jerusalem, even in the temple itself. Not again was the royal hand held out to purge Jerusalem from such iniquities; in all matters, whether of religion, or of morality, or of justice, a recklessness had fallen upon the people of Judah. Only a few prophets, and a remnant of faithful men, kept to the guiding faith of the ancient leaders of Israel, and were not dismayed. The prophet Habakkuk wrote before things had arrived at their worst; he foresees the attack of the Chaldeans; but he is not dismayed as to the final issue. He utters that memorable saying,

"The just shall live by his faith." With Jeremiah we enter upon the darkest time. Henceforth, for at least a century, pure religion is absolutely unprotected by secular force; the prophets are the sole upholders of it; and their sole weapon was the word of preaching, the word of God. That pure religion should have issued victorious out of such a conflict is one of the most memorable facts in human history.

Three prophets are the representatives to us of this conflict; Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the great unnamed prophet whose prophecies are reckoned in our Bibles as the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah. No doubt these three did not stand absolutely alone (for instance, Jeremiah had a follower, more unfortunate even than himself, that Uriah whose brief story is told in the book of Jeremiah, xxvi. 20-23); but to us they stand alone; and if ever three men did a great work, it was they. They were separated in time; and from this cause, and also from their natural differences of character, the impression which they make upon us is very different. But the underlying thought of all three is the same; and it is that which Isaiah first expounded as the secret of God's dealings with Israel; that some out of Israel would shine forth to posterity as the true people of God, and would rule the world from Zion, the sacred city; while others, deaf and blind to divine truth, would fall into oblivion and disregard. In Isaiah's time the actual exile was not foreseen, except as regards a part of the nation; hence he emphasises the return of the faithful ones to God, not their return to their own land. But the three later prophets of whom I am now speaking did emphasise in their teaching the return from actual exile; this was the first form of the ideal to which they looked in the future.

Yet the primary message of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel to the people of Judah is, not that there shall be a return from captivity, but that there shall be a captivity. It may seem a matter of course, that a return from captivity must be preceded by a captivity; but it is not as a matter of course, nor as a thing merely to be sorrowed over and lamented, that Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of the captivity of the entire people of Judah, which they foresee. It is with the full conviction that the captivity ought to come, that it is best for it to come, that they prophesy that it will come. It is not that they do not lament it; but they lament far more the unworthiness of the nation which makes it inevitable.

There is, indeed, one thing that may fairly excite our surprise, when I speak of this unworthiness of the people of Judah. Why



does Jeremiah never once refer to that great reform of religion by king Josiah which the second book of Kings describes at such length? Though Jeremiah refers to Josiah himself with praise, as being a just and compassionate ruler, he does not once speak of Josiah's religious reform. In the following passage especially (Jeremiah xxv. 1-7) he might have been expected to refer to it:

The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah; the same was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; the which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying: From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even unto this day, these three and twenty years, the word of Jehovah hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising up early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And Jehovah hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear; saying, Return ye now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that Jehovah hath given unto you and to your fathers, from of old and even for evermore: and go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the work of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith Jehovah; that ye might provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own hurt.

It will be observed that out of the twenty-three years during which Jeremiah represents himself in the above passage to have been preaching to the people of Judah that they ought to repent of their idolatry and polytheism, no fewer than thirteen are the precise period during which (according to the second book of Kings) the religious reform instituted by Josiah was in force; during which, we might suppose, idolatry and polytheism had ceased in Judah. Why does Jeremiah make no mention of this remarkable reform? I think we must answer that the reform was much less deep than is generally supposed; and it failed, because Josiah and his advisers had not adequately thought out the needs of those whom they were endeavouring to correct and amend. If any inhabitant of the country of Judah, or of Palestine (or it may be added of any country where religion was operative) desired in those days to obtain favour or counsel from the deity whom he worshipped, he offered a sacrifice to that deity. When Josiah had prohibited all sacrifices, except those offered in the temple at Jerusalem, throughout the realm which he ruled, what were the inhabitants of the country parts to do, when they wished to obtain the divine favour and counsel? To go up to Jerusalem and offer sacrifice there, was too serious a burden for them; and

they were not spiritual enough to do what Jeremiah and other spiritually-minded prophets would have counselled, namely to pray to God in spiritual trust, knowing that God does not need or require material sacrifices. Their whole conceptions were material; they prayed for material benefits; to obtain those material benefits, they offered material sacrifices; and they might have argued (and very likely did argue), "If material sacrifices are of no benefit to those who offer them, why are material sacrifices offered up in the temple at Jerusalem?" Hence, though Josiah prohibited sacrificial worship in the country parts of his realm, there was always a tendency for it to revive again; and when it revived, the deity worshipped was very likely not Jehovah, and was almost certain not to be Jehovah in that sublime sense in which the prophets understood the nature and being of that Eternal One from whom all power and strength and life sprang into birth.

That, I think, is the consideration which explains what else must so much surprise us, the total ignoring by Jeremiah of Josiah's great religious reform. In the years after the captivity, a means of reconciliation was found between the religious needs of individuals throughout the country and the claim of Jerusalem to be single and unique as a place of sacrificial worship; this was effected by the institution of synagogues, or places where worship of prayer and praise was offered without sacrifices. But in the reign of Josiah, the people were not capable of adopting this remedy. No doubt all through the country there were individuals who could understand and sympathise with the lofty ideal which Jeremiah held and proclaimed, as for instance in such a passage as the following:

Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah. Jeremiah ix. 23, 24.

But they were few who held these lofty principles; and Jeremiah was no doubt right in believing that the people of Judah could not be purified without some great overthrow which would cause searchings of heart among them.

From the time that Nebuchadnezzar appeared on the scene Jeremiah began to predict the captivity of the whole nation and their exile in Babylon. He does this in the twenty-fifth chapter



from which I have already quoted, and again in the thirty-sixth chapter (verse 29): this latter is the chapter in which it is related how king Jehoiakim burned the roll on which Jeremiah had written his threatenings. It would have fared ill with the prophet on that occasion, if Jehoiakim had been able to seize him; but he was successfully concealed. The year in which these two chapters were written was the year in which Nebuchadnezzar first appears as the overlord of Judah and Israel. Three years later Jehoiakim rebelled; and though Nebuchadnezzar was too busy to repress the rebellion in person, he incited the rival races against the kingdom of Judah, among them the Moabites and Ammonites, who were only too glad to pay off their old scores in this way. The people of Judah began to feel a retaliation which, it must be confessed, was not altogether undeserved.

Jehoiakim died before Jerusalem suffered capture; but this was not long delayed. His son Jehoiachin had only been three months king when Nebuchadnezzar appeared with a force too strong to be resisted; and Jehoiachin surrendered to him. Then ensued the first stage of the captivity of Judah; Jehoiachin himself, and thousands of the population, were carried away to Babylon.

It was the beginning of the end. Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah (and uncle of Jehoiachin) was next made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar; and ruled over what remained of the people. But he also rebelled, as Jehoiakim had done, for what cause we know not; and Nebuchadnezzar came in person with his Chaldean army, and besieged the city in form, building forts and mounds against it; for Jerusalem was by nature strong, and not easily to be taken.

Never was there a siege in all history in which the passions and emotions of men had so wide a range; not even the siege of Athens, when the Peloponnesian army and fleet lay round it. Looking at the matter superficially, the case was simply that of a small disordered community, inhabiting a very strong fortified city, besieged by the army of the mightiest power then existing in the world, and therefore certain to fall in the end by famine, if not by assault. There was no great military genius among the defenders; Zedekiah the king was an amiable but weak prince, governed by his nobles.

But there were those in the city whose thoughts and feelings redeemed these commonplace elements of the situation, and elevated the whole to a drama of the highest interest; those whose passionate affection was given to the city of Jerusalem and to

the people of Israel; those who, in their sorrow for the miseries of the present, had not forgotten the lofty ideal set before their nation, and the divine promises on which that ideal rested as on a sure foundation. Of these Jeremiah was the chief. He had no delusion as to the ability of his countrymen to resist the arms of Nebuchadnezzar; he urged them to surrender; in particular, he urged Zedekiah to surrender. If Zedekiah had been left to himself, he might have accepted the advice; but his nobles would not permit him to do so; and Jeremiah suffered greatly at their hands. Yet despair was very far from Jeremiah's heart. In order to show his good hope for the future of his people, he publicly bought the field which his cousin offered him for sale in his native village of Anathoth, although neither he nor his cousin were able to reach Anathoth, by reason of the besieging army; and he pointed the meaning of his act by the following prophecy:

Thus saith Jehovah: Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe the deeds, and seal them, and call witnesses, in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the hill country, and in the cities of the lowland, and in the cities of the South: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith Jehovah. Jeremiah xxxii. 42-44.

And again with yet tenderer emotion he writes:

Thus saith Jehovah Sabaoth, the God of Israel: Yet again shall they use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity: Jehovah bless thee, O habitation of justice, O mountain of holiness. And Judah and all the cities thereof shall dwell therein together; the husbandmen, and they that go about with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and every sorrowful soul have I replenished. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me. Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down, and to overthrow and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them to build and to plant, saith Jehovah. *Ibid.* xxxi. 23-28.

The reader will observe in this passage the sweet and delicate incoherence so characteristic of the Hebrew mind; the subject is too great for pure logic. Yet it is a most reasonable purpose, a most reasonable plan, that Jeremiah is setting before the eyes of his fellow-countrymen; there is nothing wild or arbitrary about it. They are to yield to the storm; they will be overthrown, but they may look with hope to their revival. A difficult counsel,



perhaps; but a just and wise counsel, fruitful in the hearts of some of those whom Jeremiah addressed; and it produced the fruits which Jeremiah predicted.

That double-edged prophecy, invective against his nation in the present, but hope for their future, of which Jeremiah was the spokesman in Jerusalem, was being proclaimed at the same time by his fellow-prophet Ezekiel in Babylonia, on the banks of the river Chebar. Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, was a priest; he had been taken captive in the first captivity, when Jehoiachin had surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. Hence he prophesied not to the people of Jerusalem, but to the Jewish exiles. These exiles were reckoned by the thousand, perhaps by the ten thousand. A dejected, despairing remnant; hardly able to raise their hearts to any hope; but not unaware of the past glories of their state, and not now too proud to listen to the prophetic word. Yet when Ezekiel comes to them, it is as to an obdurate people that he speaks; only it is evident that, though the exiles may be obdurate, the people of Jerusalem are regarded as still more obdurate; always, until the final capture and destruction of Jerusalem, it is of the people of Jerusalem that he is mainly thinking. When Jerusalem is captured and destroyed, his tone changes to impassioned hopefulness. The two phases of his mind, the severity and the hopefulness, are in the main successive; the severity comes first, the hopefulness afterwards; and the dividing line is the fall of Jerusalem. A few passages may be quoted in illustration of this. Here is a part of the divine message as he first received it:

Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent unto a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; not to many peoples of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, if I sent thee to them, they would hearken unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are of an hard forehead and of a stiff heart. Behold, I have made thy face hard against their faces, and thy forehead hard against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. Ezekiel iii. 4-9.

These words are like a strong phalanx of warriors entering the battlefield, and determined to carry the day. When, in pursuance of this divine command, Ezekiel came in presence of the exiles at Telabib, he was so overcome that for seven days he could not speak: and even then he expressed himself at first by symbol,

not by word. But it gradually becomes apparent both by symbol and by word (for he does at last use abundance of words) that the real object of his denunciation is Jerusalem itself. We may be sure that the exiles at Telabib entertained the hope that Jerusalem would be saved, and that they would return thither. It is Ezekiel's task to tell them that that hope is a vain one. In the vehemence of his denunciation of idol-worship, and of Jerusalem as guilty of idol-worship, he goes beyond every previous prophet. He does not altogether spare the exiles (see especially the beginning of chapter xiv), but as against the people of Jerusalem he is altogether on the side of the exiles (see chapter xi. 14-20). The first twenty-four chapters of Ezekiel are almost entirely a denunciation of his own city and nation; then follow eight chapters of denunciation of other nations: then in the thirty-third chapter comes the long expected news: "The city is smitten." Speedily does the prophet's tone change. Though he begins by telling the people of Israel that their whole land must be made desolate, and that it is the selfish "shepherds," or in other words the evil rulers, who have caused this, he goes on to predict that God himself will redeem and save his people.

For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my-sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country. Ezekiel xxxiv. 11-13.

Very beautiful and touching (in spite of the fierce denunciation of Edom in the thirty-fifth chapter) are the chapters which follow. The famous vision of the dry bones which spring to life again at God's word occurs at the beginning of the thirty-seventh chapter; and in the middle of that chapter Ezekiel prophesies (what, alas, was not fulfilled) that Ephraim and Judah should be reconciled; and he ends as follows, speaking in God's name:

So shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And my servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, they, and their children, and their children's children, for ever: and David my servant shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and



I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the nations shall know that I am Jehovah that sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. *Ibid.* xxxvii. 23-28.

From this most tender, consolatory, and sublime vision, in which all the prophecies of Ezekiel culminate, it is necessary to return to the sad and tragic situation in which the people of Judah and Israel actually stood at the moment when this prophecy was uttered. Jerusalem had fallen; Judah was experiencing the lot which, more than 130 years before, had overtaken the ten tribes. I said that there never was a siege in all history, in which the passions and emotions of men had so wide a range as in this siege of Jerusalem, which ended with its capture by Nebuchadnezzar; and now I must refer to an emotion of which I have hitherto given no example, namely, pure unmingled grief. Jeremiah, and even Ezekiel, no doubt felt grief at the fall of Jerusalem, but it was a grief so mixed with indignation at the sins of the people of Judah, that it hardly produces on us the impression of grief. But there were evidently pure souls in Jerusalem, not prophets, aware of the sins of the nation, but far more aware of the misery of the nation, and impelled by their own profound feeling to express this misery. Such a one was the author of the book of Lamentations; a book attributed in our Bibles to Jeremiah, but certainly not his, as we may see from chapter iv, verse 20 of the book;

"The breath of our nostrils," so runs the passage, "the anointed of Jehovah, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the nations."

These words plainly refer to the capture of Zedekiah by the Chaldean army in the plains of Jericho, after which he was blinded and taken prisoner to Babylon (2 Kings xxv. 4-7; Jeremiah xxxix. 4-7, lii. 7-11). Certainly Jeremiah entertained a very different expectation concerning Zedekiah from that which this passage expresses; and to say that Zedekiah was "the breath of our nostrils" was very far from his mind. The author of the Lamentations is no prophet; but he expresses a natural feeling. A few verses may be quoted from this sad elegy:

How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! Lamentations i. 1.

Jerusalem remembereth in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that were from the days of old. *Ibid.* i. 7.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith Jehovah hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. *Ibid.* i. 12.

The youth and the old man lie on the ground in the streets; my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword. Lamentations ii. 21.

Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the heaven; they chased us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness. *Ibid* iv. 19.

They ravished the women in Zion, the maidens in the cities of Judah. Princes were hanged up by their hand; the faces of elders were not honoured. *Ibid*. v. 11, 12.

Turn thou unto us, Jehovah, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. But thou hast utterly rejected us, thou art very wroth against us. *Ibid*. v. 21, 22.

It softens the pang which a sympathetic mind will feel in reading laments so piercing, to reflect that if these ancient Jews had not sorrowed over the ruin of their country, they would never have had the energy to effect the restoration of their fallen city. Their intense sorrow was one element of their power.

I have now arrived at the lowest point in the temporal fortunes of Israel, during the whole compass of the centuries which intervened between the Exodus and the Christian era. Out of that depth of humiliation the exiled people arose slowly and gradually; but before they could even begin to arise, this nadir of their fortunes had to last nearly fifty years. That which was at the heart of their essential unity, and therefore of their restoration, was the doctrine of one God, by the side of whom no other being was to be placed; and concurrently with this, the belief that the history of Israel was the great evidence of the power and action of God. This belief was the noblest entertained at that time by any community of men existent on earth; yet the miraculous form in which it was cast was an error, and had in it the seed of harm. But this miraculous form was not adopted in ill faith; nor could it easily have been dispensed with, men being what they are.

The prophet Ezekiel stood at that precise turning-point of Israelite history, when the true conversion of the people, to the beliefs just enunciated, began. Ezekiel was not the greatest of the prophets; but he was the most trenchant in his denunciation of the idolatry prevalent among the Israelites of his day. There is a tone of victory in him, which there is not in Jeremiah; Jeremiah, we feel all through, is losing his battle; Ezekiel is winning his. Yet it does not follow that Ezekiel is the superior of the two. For Jeremiah had, of the two, the more difficult task; the king and nobles of Judah in Jerusalem, fighting for temporal victory, were sure to be less amenable to religious exhortations than the exiles by the river Chebar. Then again the threatenings of Ezekiel are more earthly than those of Jeremiah, taking a fair estimate as



to the genuineness of these latter ; for there is considerable room for doubting the genuineness (at any rate in their present form) of the prophecies of Jeremiah against the nations, from the forty-sixth chapter onwards. But we have no reason for doubting the genuineness of the ninth chapter of Ezekiel ; and the judgments of God are there depicted as consisting in direct acts of slaughter by the divine command, in a manner rare in the prophets.

Yet Ezekiel was not merely a great, but a tender-hearted prophet ; his twenty-fourth chapter, in which he relates the death of his wife, must ever be felt as most pathetic ; and if he threatens the "house of Israel," it is not from any want of love towards the offenders.

Neither Jeremiah nor Ezekiel ever forgets that God is the God of the whole world. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" Jeremiah represents Jehovah as saying ; and to both prophets, God's judgments are extended over all the nations. And these judgments, in Jeremiah's mind, are not for wrath alone ; he has a regard for the heathen, as is plain from the letter which he sent to the Jewish exiles in Babylon : "Seek the peace," he writes to them, "of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto Jehovah for it ; for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace." (Jeremiah xxix. 7.) This is, of course, spoken in the name of Jehovah : the words "I have caused you to be carried away" are not intended to be the words of Jeremiah himself.

Though the duty of man towards God is the subject most prominent in both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, it must not be thought that either prophet is forgetful of the duties of man towards man ; but it is not necessary that I should exemplify this point more than I have done in what has been written above.

Neither how Jeremiah died, nor how Ezekiel died, is told us ; but the last tidings that we have of Jeremiah breathe of tragedy, almost as much as his previous career ; the melancholy history is contained in six chapters, beginning with the fortieth, of the book of Jeremiah. Yet he had faithful friends ; to one of these, Baruch, we probably owe the preservation of his prophecies, which have reached us in much disorder, yet not altogether unfaithfully.

It is natural to think that Ezekiel died in honour ; his later years were spent in depicting the Jerusalem of the future ; we may read his description in the last nine chapters of his book.

Meanwhile Israel and Judah were at their lowest level ; neither honour nor esteem was theirs ; hardly even a name ; deep darkness was over them. Yet Judah, at any rate, waited for the dawn.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CULMINATION OF PROPHECY: THE PROPHET OF THE EXILE

It was the glimmer o' dawn. In strange lands had Israel slept the sleep of sorrow; the awakening came with words of consolation :

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned : that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins. The book of Isaiah xl. 1, 2.

Who spoke these words; or who wrote them? They are to be found in our Bibles at the beginning of the fortieth chapter of the book of Isaiah; but it was not Isaiah who wrote them. For a century and a half had the voice of Isaiah been silent in death, when these words were first spoken or written; they stand at the beginning of a long prophecy occupying the latter part of the book over which "Isaiah" is affixed as the title, twenty-seven chapters altogether; the theme of these chapters all through is the return of Judah, of Israel, from the Babylonian captivity. I know no adequate reason against our accepting the primary obvious view which their contents suggest, that the whole series was written by<sup>1</sup> one person, a contemporary of the events which are in succession described; who witnessed the rise of Cyrus, and hailed him as the future conqueror of Babylon even before it actually submitted to him; who was aware (whether an actual eyewitness or not) of the transportation of the idols of Babylon by the command of Cyrus; who alternately rebuked his fellow-countrymen for their faintheartedness and for the sins to which they were prone and then again set before them the high dignity to which God was calling them; who

<sup>1</sup> I must rely on the sufficiency and clearness of the exposition which follows for the support of my statement, that these twenty-seven chapters were the work of a single prophet.



felt the divinity which lies in noble suffering, and said that the chief of all sufferers would be raised by God from death to be the Saviour of mankind; who, when he arrived at the actual sight of the ruined city and temple of Jerusalem, was struck with sorrow and dismay, but not with despair; who bade his hearers remember that the heaven was the throne of God and the earth his footstool, and that God would assuredly show his favour to the men of contrite and humble spirit, and that for Jerusalem a more glorious destiny than she had yet known was reserved in the future.

The theme of this great prophet is, it will be seen, continuous, and though dealing with different sides of the same subject-matter, not at all complex; the distinctive feature of his mind is that all the things which he loves or reverences become to him of immeasurable value, and he delights in describing them and showing forth the adornments of their infinite beauty. God, Israel, the holy souls in Israel, are the centres around which his thought moves; these shine out of the background of darkness and humiliation in which his hearers, the tribes of Israel, were sunk; and Jerusalem is the place out of which the sublime future is imagined as unfolding itself; thither are all nations to go for worship, and in love and affection towards the children of Zion. False and superstitious and cruel men, on the other hand, shall abide in their misery, a spectacle of warning to all mankind. I confess I think we must regret the verse with which the prophecy terminates, which is the first hint in the Bible of that terrible conception, hell; the verse contains a truth, but we have to restore to it that light of consolation which for the moment was hidden from the prophet's eyes. In all else he speaks most wisely and comfortingly.

Let me now quote more in full some passages of this prophecy, so as to bring out the details of it more clearly.

We perceive at the beginning that the return of Israel from Babylon is the thought which excites the prophet to speak; the return under the guidance of God: "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a high way for our God." Not that the prophet supposes that God literally traverses the desert; he knows the infinity of God too well for this; but it is the people of God who are to traverse the desert, and they bear God in their hearts. It is good tidings to Jerusalem and to the cities of Judah which he brings; evidently he means that they, now desolate, shall be inhabited again;

this meaning, implied in the fortieth chapter, is distinctly expressed at the end of the forty-fourth :

Thus saith Jehovah, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb ; I am Jehovah, that maketh all things...that saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited ; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof : that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers : that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure : even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built ; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Cyrus, the famous king of Persia, to whom Babylon surrendered in the year 538 B.C., is indicated here as the restorer of the exiled people of Judah ; he is spoken of again by name at the beginning of the forty-fifth chapter. He had been referred to previously, though not named, in the forty-first chapter, verse 2 :

Who hath raised up one from the east, whom he calleth in righteousness to his foot ? he giveth nations before him, and maketh him rule over kings ; he giveth them as the dust to his sword, as the driven stubble to his bow.

It is Cyrus who is raised for the work, but who has raised him ? The answer is given two verses later :

I Jehovah, the first, and with the last ; I am he.

Cyrus, in the eyes of the prophet, is God's agent for the restoration of Israel, and for the rebuilding of the city and temple of Jérusalem. It is probable that the Jewish leaders had already entered into communication with Cyrus, and had obtained from him promises of goodwill, even before Babylon had surrendered to him ; and the assured tone in which the prophet speaks would seem to show that he had some knowledge of this. But it is no just inference from the prophet's words that Cyrus had a peculiar interest in the Jews more than in any other of the nations that had been oppressed by Babylon ; the prophet no doubt does not forbid our thinking this ; but he does not compel us to think it. Whether Cyrus had this peculiar interest in the Jews, is a question that will concern us when the book of Ezra comes under discussion ; but at present it will be sufficient to quote the two other passages, besides those already quoted, in which the prophet refers to Cyrus. The first is chapter xlv. 1-4 :

Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings ; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut ; I will go before thee, and make the rugged places plain : I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron : and I



will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I am Jehovah, which call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

The other passage is from the forty-sixth chapter, verses 8-13: Jehovah is addressing Israel:

Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country; yea, I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it. Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

The "ravenous bird" is Cyrus; a very important person to the prophet of the exile; but it is on account of Israel that the prophet takes an interest in him. Cyrus is not mentioned again after the passage just quoted, and after two more chapters Babylon, though once or twice referred to, is not named; the forty-eighth chapter makes it apparent that the captive Israelites are now free to go out of Babylon:

"Go ye forth of Babylon," the prophet cries (verse 20), "flee ye from the Chaldeans; with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth: say ye, Jehovah hath redeemed his servant Jacob."

After this utterance it is plain that the difficulties, whatever they may be, in the way of the return from the captivity, do not lie in Babylonian oppression; and the natural inference also is that Cyrus has done his work after having put an end to the Babylonian oppression, since he is not afterwards mentioned.

But difficulties there are evidently still, and it is clear that in the judgment of the prophet these lie mainly in the character of the people whom he is addressing, whatever we prefer to call them, Israelites or Jews; it may be that we should keep the more general title, Israelites, a little longer; it is not till the return to Jerusalem and Judæa had begun that the more restricted title, Jews, becomes the more natural one.

The Israelites are of course the main interest of the prophet; not Cyrus, however much he may exalt him. And it is of the highest historical importance to mark the relations between our prophet and Israel; for he reveals to us the true soul of Israel,

in its highest form ; and he shows us how Israel was at that moment divided into a nobler portion and a baser ; the nobler portion being those who embraced their God-given mission of founding a State at Jerusalem, which should be a light to the world ; the baser portion being those who only cared for present comfort, many of whom were sinking into the idolatries of the heathen.

When the prophet begins his prophecy, his hopeful summons to his people is scarcely mingled with any reproof ; take for instance the following passage :

But thou, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend : thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the corners thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away ; fear thou not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded : they that strive with thee shall be as nothing, and shall perish. The book of Isaiah xli. 8-11.

And again :

I Jehovah have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles ; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. *Ibid.* xlii. 6, 7.

This enthusiastic acceptance of Israel as the beloved servant of God is shortly interrupted by a gentle reproof :

"Who is blind," cries the divine voice, "but my servant ? or deaf, as the messenger that I send ? who is blind as he that is at peace with me, and blind as Jehovah's servant ? Thou seest many things, but thou observest not ; his ears are open, but he heareth not. It pleased Jehovah, for his righteousness' sake, to make the teaching great and glorious. But this is a people robbed and spoiled ; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses." *Ibid.* xlii. 19-22.

Poor Israel ! doubtless with too much truth was it said that they were "a people robbed and spoiled" ; many, perhaps most of them, could not lift their souls to the apprehension of the message of hope. But the prophet resumes his encouragement :

But now saith Jehovah that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel : Fear not, for I have redeemed thee ; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.... Since thou hast



been precious in my sight, and honourable, and I have loved thee ; therefore will I give men for thee, and peoples for thy life. Fear not ; for I am with thee : I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west ; I will say to the north, Give up ; and to the south, Keep not back ; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth . . . Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. *Ibid.* xliii. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8.

Satire on the graven images of Babylon presently follows ; on the gods that are the handiwork of man ; and, shortly after, satire on Babylon herself, the fallen city :

Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon ; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans ; for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate . . . I was wroth with my people, I profaned mine inheritance, and gave them into thine hand : thou didst show them no mercy ; upon the aged hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. *Ibid.* xlvii. 1, 6.

In the last-quoted passage tenderness is still almost the sole feeling of the prophet towards Israel, the Israel whom he saw (whether in Babylonia or in the neighbouring countries) ; he knows that Israel has sinned in the past, but past sins have been wiped out, and he makes no reproach concerning them. But in the next chapter, the forty-eighth, the prophet's tone changes, and he speaks with severity, though at last with some relenting, against his own people :

Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah ; which swear by the name of Jehovah, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness . . . Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass ; therefore I have declared it to thee from of old ; before it came to pass I showed it thee : lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them . . . Yea, thou heardest not ; yea, thou knewest not ; yea, from of old thine ear was not opened : for I knew that thou didst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off . . . Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments ! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea : thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the grains thereof : his name should not be cut off nor destroyed from before me. *Ibid.* xlviii. 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 18, 19.

What caused this stern rebuke ? If we bear in mind the intense zeal of the prophet for the return of the Israelites to the land of their forefathers, we cannot but think that some lassitude had been exhibited in this direction ; many of the exiles had settled in Babylonia, and did not wish to go back to their old

homes; and the words of the passage imply that idolatry still existed among them. The liberty given them to return to the land of Palestine, to Judæa and Jerusalem, appeared to them a terrible labour and trial, and by no means liberty. Against this coldness of heart, against this lassitude, against this not infrequent idolatry, the prophet was aiming the sharpest arrows out of his quiver. He was at once forbidding and commanding; he was forbidding idolatry; he was commanding the return to Jerusalem; and all in the name of God. If this be a true account of him, he was something more than a prophet; he was an energetic inciter to present action. That this is a true account of him, I think we shall be convinced if we read attentively the passage last quoted, and also that which immediately succeeds it, which I will now quote (I quoted part of it a few pages back, but I must quote it again in this new connexion):

Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans; with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth: say ye, Jehovah hath redeemed his servant Jacob. And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. There is no peace, saith Jehovah, unto the wicked. The book of Isaiah xlviii. 20-22.

There is in that passage the apparent, and to a certain extent real, incoherence, which is so common in the Bible; there is, however, an inward connexion of thought, when we perceive what the prophet's drift is. The exhortation to depart from Babylon is obvious in its meaning, but the verse which follows, "And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts," etc. is no direct exhortation, and appears to refer to incidents of a past time. It does refer to incidents of a past time, but it has a direct bearing on the time then present; for what the prophet means to say is that just as God led the Israelites through the wilderness of Sinai on the way to Canaan, and caused water to flow out of the rock for them, so now he will bear Israel safely through the wilderness from Babylon back to Jerusalem. We see how deeply ingrained the belief in the miracles of the Exodus was in pious Israelites of that day; and those who cannot share the belief in miracles may nevertheless hold that God's protecting power was truly over the Israelites of the Exodus; and the prophet whom I am now quoting will not appear without ground for his faith, or for the aim which he is setting before his fellow-countrymen. Similarly, the solemn words with which this



particular utterance concludes, "There is no peace, saith Jehovah, unto the wicked," are evidence to us of the deep importance which he attached to the counsel which he was giving, and of the danger incurred by those whom he addressed, if they persisted in slothful indifference.

Yet that indifference was, to a large extent, a fact ; and we see the result of this fact in the subsequent utterances of the prophet. Israel as a whole is, in his eyes, ceasing to be the ideal servant of Jehovah. Once more, and once only, does he give this title to the nation in its entirety ; but even in giving the title, he passes away from it, and makes it clear that the chosen servant of God is intimately related to Israel indeed, but still not identical with Israel. I must quote this important passage, which follows upon that last quoted :

Listen, O isles, unto me ; and hearken, ye peoples, from far : Jehovah hath called me from the womb ; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name : and he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me ; and he hath made me a polished shaft, in his quiver hath he kept me close : and he said unto me, Thou art my servant ; Israel, in whom I will be glorified. But I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity : yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah, and my recompense with my God. And now saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, and that Israel be gathered unto him : (for I am honourable in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God is become my strength :) yea, he saith, It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that my salvation may be unto the end of the earth. Thus saith Jehovah, the redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers : Kings shall see and arise ; princes, and they shall worship ; because of Jehovah that is faithful, even the Holy One of Israel, who hath chosen thee. Thus saith Jehovah, In an acceptable time have I answered thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee : and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages ; saying to them that are bound, Go forth ; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. *Ibid.* xlix. 1-9.

To whom does the prophet represent Jehovah as speaking in the above passage ? Who is it that is to gather Israel, to be a servant of rulers, and yet to be worshipped by princes ? How shall we appropriate to ourselves the thought of the prophet as he thought it, his feelings as he felt them ?

He has receded from the thought that Israel as an entire race visibly seen with the eyes is the servant of God ; but he has not receded from the thought that the spiritual Israel is

the servant of God ; the spiritual Israel being understood to be the faithful in Israel. It will of course be noticed that he uses the singular number when speaking of the servant of God : " he said unto me, Thou art my servant " ; and again, " to him whom man despiseth," the despised one being the servant of God ; and it may be asked whether the prophet has any individual person in his mind. But if the prophet had had any individual person in his mind, he could not have spoken with this indefiniteness, sometimes as if he himself were the servant of God, sometimes as if another person were so ; his thought, with all its depth, is not so precise as to determine who the servant of God is. No doubt he did think of himself as a servant of God ; no doubt also he saw others around him whom he deemed to be servants of God ; but in spite of this his conception is not absolutely determined. It is indeed a conception too great for absolute definition ; and so it continues all through.

So, too, when we ask what is the glorious end which he has in view, it is sometimes the gathering together of the nations into one people of God, sometimes the consolation and restoration of Zion, of Jerusalem. He never forgets that a special material work has to be done, the bringing of the people of Israel to Jerusalem again ; but this material work expands as he surveys it, in all manner of directions ; nay, it expands at last into a regeneration of the whole earth and heavens.

We ask with wonder, what effect this prophecy, so clear and definite as far as the return from the Babylonian exile is concerned, so vast in its expansion of that theme, produced on those who first heard it ? No record tells us ; we can only judge by the course of the prophecy itself. The passage which I last quoted is succeeded by one full of exalted promises, and of consolation to Zion for her past afflictions ; and then, quite suddenly, the prophet turns to the actual people whom he sees, and to their sins in the present and in the past :

Thus saith Jehovah, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, wherewith I have put her away ? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you ? Behold, for your iniquities were ye sold, and for your transgressions was your mother put away. Wherefore, when I came, was there no man ? when I called, was there none to answer ? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem ? or have I no power to deliver ? The book of Isaiah l. 1, 2.

It is plain that the prophet is still addressing a backward people, a people unwilling to move ; and from the words which



shortly follow in the same chapter it appears that the prophet himself has been suffering ill-treatment in the cause for which he has been so ardent ; himself, and it may be others along with him, his fellow-workers.

"I gave," he says, "my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair : I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord Jehovah will help me ; therefore have I not been confounded : therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." *Ibid.* l. 6, 7.

Possibly the prophet had in his mind the words which his immediate predecessor Ezekiel had written, as spoken to him by the divine voice : "As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead : fear them not" (Ezekiel iii. 9). At all events it is clear that the task which our prophet of the captivity was championing did bring suffering in its train.

The restoration of Zion, the return of Israel to Zion, was a deep-rooted purpose in the prophet's heart, as all must feel who read his words ; and yet he never allows it to be supposed that his whole purpose is summed up in this end. His tone rises ; and in one of the sublimest verses in the Bible he announces that visible things are as nothing when brought into comparison with that salvation which God offers :

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath : for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die like gnats : but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. *Ibid.* li. 6.

That is a verse which sets, in the most decisive manner, the spiritual cause above the material effect, and this temperament manifests itself throughout his whole prophecy. An assurance such as this verse contains would not, in the ordinary affairs of men, be regarded as forcible in promoting practical action ; the very fact that it sets so little value on finite things might make it appear an exhortation to quietude. But when the whole circumstances are considered, a different estimate will be formed of the prophet's practical ability. The things of earth which loomed so large before the exiles in Babylon were the dangers involved in any such daring action as a return to Jerusalem ; the danger from enemies, the danger from scarcity in deserts, the danger from weariness and exhaustion ; it is these dangers which the prophet is exhorting his fellow-countrymen to despise ; but as to the return to Jerusalem, that is a command

and promise which come from God, and he bids his hearers honour them. His preaching was not merely exalted but practical ; and there are verses towards the end of the fifty-second chapter which appear to have been written when the first beginning of that return, for which he had so earnestly pleaded, was being actually made :

“Depart ye, depart ye,” he cries, “go ye out from thence (i.e. from Babylon), touch no unclean thing ; go ye out of the midst of her ; be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of Jehovah. For ye shall not go out in haste, neither shall ye go by flight ; for Jehovah will go before you ; and the God of Israel shall be your rearward.”

The mention of the “vessels of Jehovah” in this passage confirms what the book of Ezra tells us (Ezra i. 7-11), that when the Jewish exiles departed from Babylon, Cyrus (through his treasurer Mithredath) handed over to Sheshbazzar, who is called “the prince of Judah,” the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the temple at Jerusalem and had put into the Babylonian temples ; these, the book of Ezra tells us, Sheshbazzar with the exiles actually brought back to Jerusalem. It must be observed, however, that our prophet by no means confirms the further statement of the book of Ezra (chapters iii. 7 and vi. 4) that Cyrus gave large contributions to the building of the temple out of his own royal funds. That subject, and the book of Ezra generally, belong to the next chapter, and will receive consideration there. I return to the great prophet of the exile.

He has seen the first group of exiles begin their return from Babylon ; it would seem, from what follows, that he himself accompanies them ; and now, at that moment for him so wonderful, the moment when the seed which he had done so much to foster is sending out its first shoots, he begins the utterance of the profoundest of all his prophecies, the prophecy which leads up from the inward nature of the servant of God, from that self-sacrificing humility which accepts death uncomplainingly, to the victory of this same servant, the victory to which death is the avenue, the victory of all-enduring, everlasting love. In a few words he describes the whole compass of that righteous conduct in which lies a saving power, which brings those who embrace its full meaning from the confusions of earth to the harmony and order of heaven. Though the passage to which I am now referring is one of the best known in the whole Bible, it is so important that I must quote it in its entirety :



Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Like as many were astonished at thee, (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,) so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which hath not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand. Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and his life who shall<sup>1</sup> recount? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And they made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant make many righteous: and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bare the sin of many, and maketh intercession for the transgressors. The book of Isaiah lii. 13–liii. 12.

We read these mysterious words, and ask of whom the prophet is thinking, and how he conceives of the death of the servant of God, concerning which he writes so loftily, and whether this death be a thing of the past or a thing of the future. I said a little while back, in writing of the forty-ninth chapter (in which chapter it is that the prophet first treats of the servant of God as distinct from the whole nation of Israel), that the prophet's conception of the servant of God was one too great for absolute definition. We must I think connect it with those previous prophecies, mainly (though not quite exclusively) uttered by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, of a king who should rule with

<sup>1</sup> I have taken the translation of this clause from the margin of the Revised Version; I should have liked to suggest "his posterity," but fear it is inadmissible.

equity and mercy, a king often symbolised under the name of David, or more vaguely (as in that beautiful chapter, the eleventh of Isaiah) as "a shoot out of the stock of Jesse." It is impossible that our prophet should not have known of these older prophecies; it is impossible that he should have disregarded them. He had then before him already the conception of a great person who should lead Israel in the right way, nay who should lead the whole world in the right way. He inherited this conception; but the circumstances of his time, the increased experiences which his nation had latterly won, made him treat it differently from the manner in which Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had treated it. What our prophet of the exile had seen, and what his predecessors had not equally seen, was the intimate connexion of holiness with suffering; the holy, righteous person finds that he can relieve the burdens of others by taking them upon himself, and in a spirit of divine mercy does take them upon himself. Our prophet had seen this exemplified in the faithful of his own time; he had seen the torch of living hope handed on by means of advocates who had suffered on its behalf; he had suffered on its behalf himself. Hence, when he took up the theme of his predecessors, he took it up with an addition. The divine government of the world was about to become a reality; this had been said by his predecessors; what he added was that suffering and self-sacrifice were the means by which that government would come to birth. If we take his words literally, the servant of God, in whom the divine power was to rest, must die before he could receive that power. Is there any reason why the words of the prophet should not be taken literally?

There is not, I think, any adequate reason; but it will be proper to mention the chief hypothesis which involves a non-literal acceptation of the death of the servant of God. If we think of this servant as meaning the suffering people of Israel, then that people must be regarded as suffering and humiliated indeed, but not as literally dying (for the death of individual Israelites is not the same as the death of the nation). This interpretation would be a possible one, if the prophet had not so clearly shown that he did not regard the whole nation of Israel as exercising a divine function. He had begun by so regarding them; but he had decisively changed in the forty-eighth and forty-ninth chapters, and never recurred to his original attitude. The elect people are not Israel, though they are "a seed out



of Jacob " (lxv. 9). When this is clearly seen, it is no longer natural to think of this unnamed body of the elect as the subject of the mysterious passage on which I am commenting ; they did not constitute a body clearly marked off to the eyes of men.

I conclude then that the servant of God in these chapters is the same conception as that which Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel had put forward, of a king who should rule in God's name ; but this later prophet has discerned more of the manner of the divine rule than his predecessors had been able to compass, and has seen that death must precede the exercise of it, and that self-sacrificing love is the instrument by which it is accomplished. What the prophet writes is prediction, not mere description of the past ; at the same time the past is the storehouse from which he draws the material for his prediction ; he knows what is to be, because he has so accurately distinguished the working of God's spirit in the events which he has seen.

It has not been an unknown opinion that the prophet, when he speaks of this divine sufferer, means some person actually known to himself, who had died as a witness for God's truth. But had the prophet meant this, it is incredible that he should not have named the person who, on this supposition, was so exalted and so near to God.

The interpretation which I have given to the passage is, I feel sure, a worthy one ; it contains no element which, considering the lofty spirituality of the prophet who wrote these chapters, can be regarded as improbable ; and it is a premonition, not in every respect but in the most important respects, of the life and purposes of Jesus Christ, who in the real climax of human history, took as his own the spiritual scheme which had been sketched by this prophet of the exile. That scheme is, to put it briefly, the method of government by spiritual attraction.

But now, having declared the fundamental nature of the divine law, our prophet goes on to declare the glorious sequence of it ; which in spite of the apparent feebleness of the working causes, shall nevertheless be accomplished :

Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear ; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child ; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Jehovah. The book of Isaiah liv. 1.

He is reverting, it will be seen, from the individual to the community. The sacred community, the sacred city, is dear to the heart of the prophet ; and certainly he was thinking

in the first instance of the literal Israel, the literal Jerusalem; it is no imaginary or abstract people that he addresses in the following words:

O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set thy stones in fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of thy children. The book of Isaiah liv. 11-13.

Yet it must not be thought that now, any more than in the preceding chapters, the prophet ignores the offences of that Israel which he saw plainly before him. The chapters from the fifty-fifth to the fifty-ninth inclusive are ethical, and very nobly ethical, and they are very far from being altogether laudatory of Israel. We perceive that there are in Israel violent men, idolaters, and hypocrites even among those who worship Jehovah; the fifty-ninth chapter is especially strong in the way of reproof. What Israelites the prophet has in view is uncertain; he may at times be recurring in his thoughts to those in Babylonia; or there may have been other communities which he passed on the way, perhaps not always of the tribe of Judah. Always he is insistent on the humility which it is needful for man to preserve towards God:

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. *Ibid.* lvii. 15.

Two other things will strike us in this series of chapters. First, the stress laid upon keeping the sabbath. The same characteristic is noticeable in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but not in any prophet before these. In Hosea (ii. 11), and Amos (viii. 5), the sabbath is mentioned together with the festival of the new moon, as an acknowledged holiday, but with no extraordinary reverence: in Isaiah (i. 13) it is mentioned even slightly, and again in connexion with the new moon. But in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, and in the prophet with whom the present chapter is concerned, the keeping of the sabbath is enjoined as a high moral duty, while the feast of the new moon has sunk into an entirely inferior position, barely recognised, and with no stress laid upon it. What is the reason of this difference of tone? Clearly it came from the fact that the law, as a written document, was present to the minds of the later prophets in a way in which



it was not before the minds of the earlier prophets. Not that written commands were entirely unknown to Hosea, to Amos, to Isaiah; we have reason to believe that the "ten words" were, in some form or other, really contained in the ark of the testimony, which was in the temple; and no doubt some of the legislation in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of Exodus was already in writing. But the book of Deuteronomy, the main substance of which was first published in the reign of Josiah, had brought the written word into a prominence unknown before; and as a written ordinance, the feast of the new moon had little prominence, the sabbath had great prominence. The feast of the new moon is prescribed in the book of Numbers alone, and even there as a duty incumbent on the priests, rather than on the whole people; the emphasis laid on the sabbath, whenever commands were written down, must even in early times have been far other than this<sup>1</sup>. Hence, while we must be far from thinking of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the prophet of the captivity as formalists (and no doubt the institution of the sabbath did really and naturally commend itself to them), their religious spirit had something more in it of "the religion of the book" than was the case with Hosea, Amos, or Isaiah.

To return to the prophet of the captivity. The other point that we have to notice in the chapters with which I am now concerned (the fifty-fifth to the fifty-ninth in the book of Isaiah) is the breadth of human feeling shown in them. Far is the prophet from a narrow nationalism of sentiment. Thus he writes:

Neither let the stranger, that hath joined himself to Jehovah, speak, saying, Jehovah will surely separate me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith Jehovah of the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and hold fast by my covenant: Unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the strangers, that join themselves to Jehovah, to minister unto him, and to love the name of Jehovah, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and holdeth fast by my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar: for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples. The Lord Jehovah which gathered the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside his own that are gathered. *Ibid.* lvi. 3-8.

<sup>1</sup> That is, judging by what we now find in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

If these counsels had been followed, how far broader and more humane would the Jewish mind and temper have been, during the centuries which followed the enactments of Ezra and Nehemiah, than was actually the case !

The five chapters of moral teaching, to which I have been referring, are followed by three in which the enthusiasm of the prophet is carried to the highest pitch. Be it remembered, he is approaching Jerusalem. Especially glowing is the sixtieth chapter, the first of the three. All these chapters are so well known, and so perfectly simple, that quotation from them is hardly needed ; yet at the end of the sixty-second chapter there is a short passage which may supply us with an inference, not always perceived :

Go through, go through the gates ; prepare ye the way of the people ; cast up, cast up the high way ; gather out the stones ; lift up an ensign for the peoples. Behold, Jehovah hath proclaimed unto the end of the earth, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh. The book of Isaiah lxii. 10, 11.

What can this mean but that the mountain on which Jerusalem had stood is in front of the prophet and of the returning exiles ? It is not possible for us to say precisely by what route the company had travelled, or whom they had passed on the way ; but part of it would naturally lie in a hilly country, which is spoken of in the fifty-seventh chapter. Some passages in the chapters from the fifty-sixth to the fifty-ninth look as if the company had been passing by settlements of unfaithful Israelites ; but we cannot say this certainly. At all events, in the sixty-second chapter, they are near Jerusalem ; the desolation of it must have been visible to them ; and the change in the prophet's feelings, which could not be avoided, then came upon him. A sudden anger seizes him as he thinks what the nations, especially Edom, have done against the sacred city ; and in the sixty-third chapter he sees, as in a vision, God taking vengeance upon Edom. But grief succeeds to anger ; he pleads with God by the memory of those old days, when the divine protection had been over Israel in that long and perilous journey from Egypt to Canaan. The days of Israel in their own land had been but short ; will not God remember his fatherhood, and succour his own people ?

The sixty-fourth chapter finds the prophet actually in Jerusalem ; what a contrast is the ruined city to the splendid visions which he had lately expressed ! He breaks forth into sad crying :



Be not wroth very sore, Jehovah, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, look, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, Jehovah? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore? *Ibid.* lxiv. 9-11.

Can anything be more natural in feeling? I would ask those who would split up the twenty-seven chapters with which I am here concerned into fragments, and assign them to two or perhaps three different prophets, and perhaps place them at a date a century or two later than the surrender of Babylon to Cyrus, whether every step in the narrative is not clearly marked as belonging to the very first return of the Jews from their Babylonian captivity? Not only the acts described, but the emotions also, various as they are, belong absolutely to this epoch, and to none other.

The two chapters which follow the sixty-fourth (and which form the conclusion of the prophecy) could not be in that strain of unmingled rapture which characterises the three chapters from the sixtieth to the sixty-second. The situation was inherently difficult; and though it is not likely that any of the actual party that had returned from Babylon were idolaters, it is plain that there were still Israelites who were so. It is likely that a remnant of the poorest Jews had continued to live in Judæa all through the years of the captivity, and how far they may have erred spiritually we have no means of knowing; but also we should rather judge from the language used, that the prophet returned to Babylon to obtain fresh recruits for the settlement at Jerusalem. Verses like the following would seem naturally to refer to sojourners in Babylon, not to dwellers in Judæa:

I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way which is not good, after their own thoughts: a people that provoketh me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens, and burning incense upon bricks, &c. *Ibid.* lxv. 2, 3.

The prophet, even after the return from the exile had begun, had plainly a very difficult task before him. But in how much greater a degree visible things fail him, so much the more fervently does he rest on the invisible. Listen to the words which he hears the voice of God saying:

Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. *Ibid.* lxv. 17.

And so again, when the difficulty of building the temple anew presses hard, he reverts to that higher spiritual reality which transcends temples of stone :

Thus saith Jehovah : The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool : what manner of house will ye build unto me ? and what place shall be my rest ? The book of Isaiah lxvi. 1.

Yet after all, such sayings must be taken with proper limitation. Though, when hard pressed by visible failure, the prophet takes refuge in the invisible hope and trust, yet the earthly Jerusalem is to the end sacred to him, beloved by him, the theme of his ardent hope :

"Rejoice ye with Jerusalem," he cries out, "and be glad for her, all ye that love her ; rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn over her ; that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations ; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory." *Ibid.* lxvi. 10, 11.

In this situation, of imperfect fulfilment but ardent hope, the book of the prophet of the exile terminates. Sorrow and joy are both with him ; sorrow for the abundance of the faithlessness which he sees, joy in the prospect of a victory which is to come.

My theme in the present chapter has been the delineation of one of the greatest among men : and no mere theorist either, no mere visionary ; but one who, more than any other, created the spirit which enabled the Jews to return from Babylon to their own land. Without that return, the whole message of the Jews to the world would have been frittered away ; for the time was not ripe for a religion that had no local centre at all. Out of the earthly Jerusalem has sprung the Christian hope of a heavenly Jerusalem—which is indeed the greater ; but the earthly Jerusalem was needed as a seed-ground for the heavenly which was to come.

Who was this great prophet ? We know not his name, and scarcely anything of his history ; and the only honour which his fellow-countrymen accorded to him was to attribute his writings to the most illustrious, save himself, of all the prophets whom Israel produced.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RESTORATION OF JERUSALEM: THE PSALMS: ZECHARIAH

THE Babylonian captivity was a time of darkness: the dawn came with that great prophet whose writings I described in the foregoing chapter.

But how long and obscure was that twilight of dawn! How stormy and troublous were the ages before full daylight shines again on that people in whose hearts was buried the secret of God! The return from the captivity, the rebuilding of the temple and of Jerusalem, the rigid legislation of Ezra, the diverse fortunes of the Jews as the Persian dominion yielded to the Greek dominion, and lastly as the Ptolemies of Egypt receded from their tenure of Palestine and the Syrian Greek dynasty (the Antiochi) succeeded thereto—what changes were these, and how little do we know of them! I must talk now of Jews, not of Israelites, as the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judæa; Israelites they were of course, but not the whole of Israel.

And now let me mention the point of difficulty and doubt which stands in our front at the very beginning of this subject. Was the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity a rapid or a slow process? Was Zerubbabel, the famous rebuilder of the temple at Jerusalem, a person who lived in the latter part of the sixth century before Christ, under Darius son of Hystaspes (the conqueror who won supreme station by his own warlike prowess); or was he a person who lived a hundred years later, under the comparatively insignificant Darius Nothus? The former is so much the ordinary view, that I assumed it as a matter of course when I began to inquire into this subject. I found myself forced to change it; and my conclusion is that the view which places Zerubbabel about the dates 422–418 B.C. is not subject to any serious difficulty, while it gives a simplicity and clearness to the whole tenor of the history which is quite wanting to the ordinary view<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The later date, which I myself follow, has had some supporters; and I may especially name Sir Henry Howorth as having anticipated some of my arguments in the present chapter, and in the first Appendix to it.

It will be best for me to give first a brief chronological statement of both views; and I will begin by stating, with dates, the ordinary view, which is the one that I do not hold:

	B.C.
Return of Jews from Babylon, by permission of Cyrus, to the number of some 40,000 .. .. .	538
Commencement of rebuilding the temple by Zerubbabel ..	537
The rebuilding stopped through hostile influences .. ..	536
Recommended by Zerubbabel, by permission of Darius son of Hystaspes .. .. .	520
The temple completed .. .. .	516
The half-real, half-fabulous story told in the book of Esther between 485 B.C. and	465
The mission of Ezra to Jerusalem .. .. .	458
The mission of Nehemiah, and the rebuilding of the walls ..	445
The last dated incident in the book of Nehemiah .. ..	433
The incident mentioned in the papyri of Elephantinè near Assuan	407
The incidents mentioned in Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> , book xi. cc. 7 and 8 are subject to so much doubt on this supposition that they cannot be dated.	
Seizure of Jerusalem by Ptolemy I king of Egypt .. ..	320

Such is the sequence of the main events in Jewish history on the supposition that Zerubbabel belongs to the time of Darius son of Hystaspes. But if he belonged to the time of Darius Nothus, a century later than the earlier Darius, the chronological table is as follows:

	B.C.
First return of Jews from Babylon, in not very great numbers, with the prophet of the exile (i.e. the writer of Isaiah xl.-lxvi.) and also with Sheshbazzar (Ezra i.) .. ..	about 538
A temple built, of which the only record is in the Psalms (e.g. Psalm v. xxvii. &c.) .. .. .	about 530
The troubles for which the book of Esther is evidence between 485 B.C. and	465
During these troubles the above-mentioned temple is destroyed (Psalms lxxiv. and lxxix.) .. .. .	perhaps 483
Efforts to rebuild the temple and walls in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus frustrated (see Ezra iv. 7-24).. ..	about 460
Return of Zerubbabel with a large number of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem, by permission of Darius Nothus	about 423
The temple rebuilt and finally finished .. .. .	418
The incident mentioned in the papyri of Elephantinè near Assuan .. .. .	407
The mission of Ezra to Jerusalem .. .. .	398
The mission of Nehemiah, and rebuilding of the walls.. ..	385
The last dated incident in the book of Nehemiah .. ..	373
The incidents mentioned in Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> , book xi. cc. 7 and 8 .. .. .	from about 360 B.C. to about 332
Seizure of Jerusalem by Ptolemy I, king of Egypt .. ..	320



Following, as I do, the second of these two chronologies, I will now mention the most remarkable feature (besides the simplicity of historical sequence) that will appear as I tell the tale. This is, that the Jews will be seen in a new light, brave, enduring, patient, tenderhearted; imperfect indeed, and falling into error at last; yet in a memorable age most memorable. My best plan will be to tell their story as I see it, with as little argument as possible, though not disguising difficulties; the most important arguments I will reserve for an Appendix.

It will be remembered that in the last chapter I have described the first return of the Jews from Babylon, as it is to be gathered from the ardent writing of the great prophet of the exile (and his writing, it will have been seen, contains notes of history, as well as imaginative predictions of the future). No one will say that his description of the situation as he actually saw it is a very cheerful or happy one, enthusiastic as his hopes of the future were. He has praised Cyrus; but he has nothing to say of any help in money or materials given by Cyrus for the building of the temple, such as is mentioned in Ezra iii. 7, vi. 3, 4 and 1 Esdras vi. 24, 25. It is not likely indeed that Cyrus made any such gifts; there was no reason why he should distinguish the Jews from the other peoples whom he had liberated from the Babylonian yoke.

It would follow then that the first company of exiles who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem were poor, and not very numerous. Yet the statement in the first chapter of Ezra, that they carried with them the vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple at Jerusalem and had retained at Babylon, is quite probable, and is supported by the prophet of the exile<sup>1</sup>. Neither have we any reason to doubt the accuracy of the first chapter of Ezra, when it tells us that Sheshbazzar, "the prince of Judah," was the leader of the returning exiles.

On the other hand, the second chapter of Ezra has no business at all to be where it is; the list which it gives of the returning exiles does not properly belong to the reign of Cyrus at all; it belongs to the time of Zerubbabel, it is true, but that time was not the time of Cyrus. (For the proof that this was the case, see the first Appendix to the present chapter.) The motive for its insertion where we find it in the book of Ezra is a quite intelligible one; it was borrowed in order to give fullness and

<sup>1</sup> The book of Isaiah lii. 11.

substance to a famous event, the first return of the Jews from Babylon by permission or command of Cyrus; for the account of this event in the first chapter of Ezra was certainly but meagre. The third chapter of Ezra is a further attempt to amplify and adorn the narrative of the same event; it is a picturesque and imaginative<sup>1</sup> composition, which apparently draws one of its main themes (the weeping of the old men who had seen the ancient temple) from a hint in the second chapter of the prophet Haggai. The opening verses of the fourth chapter of Ezra may contain a true fact, but are misplaced. In the sixth verse of this chapter, however, we have real though brief information:

And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

This verse at once reminds us of the book of Esther; Ahasuerus is, as is now known, Xerxes<sup>2</sup>; and after this the book of Ezra proceeds in a generally trustworthy manner, the kings being named in the right order, and an order which clearly indicates that the king of Persia under whom Zerubbabel built the temple was Darius Nothus.

But it will be seen that on this showing there is a great gap of fifty years at least during which the history is a blank. As far as any historical narrative is concerned, we know nothing at all of what happened between the return of the first exiles in the time of Cyrus and the troubles of which we have evidence in the book of Esther, which took place in the reign of Xerxes. Or, giving the dates as precisely as we can, from 537 B.C. to 485 B.C. historical evidence fails us. At the beginning of this time we have as evidence the last twenty-seven chapters of the book of Isaiah and the first chapter of the book of Ezra; at the end of it we have the book of Esther and the single verse, Ezra iv. 6. Are the intervening years really a blank?

No, they are not a blank; they are filled up by a large portion of the psalms; roughly speaking, by the first eighty-nine psalms in our book of Psalms. I must not, of course, be understood to speak with absolute precision. I have already, in speaking of David, mentioned the probability that some of these psalms trace their origin from him and his contemporaries, though not exactly in the form in which we have them now. On the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> Similar imaginative stories are found in the books of Chronicles, of which the book of Ezra is a continuation; see for instance the great victories attributed to the kings Abijah and Asa in 2 Chronicles xiii. and xiv.

<sup>2</sup> See Sayce's *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, p. 22. Ahasuerus = Akhasvêrosh = (in Persian) Khshayârsâh = Xerxes.



a few may be later than the period I have named, and after the close of the reign of Xerxes. The eighty-fifth psalm certainly belongs to a later and more settled time than the years between 538 B.C. and the close of the reign of Xerxes. But by far the greater number of these eighty-nine psalms exactly suit the period of which I am speaking, and they suit no other period.

Let it be noted that they continue, with slight differences, the tone and the spiritual horizon of the great prophet of the exile. There is indeed more mourning and woe in them; there is an immensity of mourning and woe in these eighty-nine psalms. But the prophet of the exile speaks of mourning and woe also. Then there is in these psalms that peculiarity which is so strong in the prophet of the exile; their representation is that the path of mourning and woe is that which leads to future glory. This is the teaching of the chapter which is reckoned the fifty-third in the book of Isaiah; and this is the teaching of the twenty-second psalm. Internal evidence makes us sure that those two compositions were not written at periods of time far apart. The sixty-ninth psalm has very much the same characteristics; and the alternation of anguish and hopefulness is very marked in the whole series.

But there is one characteristic in which these eighty-nine psalms do differ from the prophet of the exile; there is very much more fighting in them. That is natural; the prophet of the exile was accompanying a set of travelling emigrants, who would have no time to make enemies during their journey, and who would choose the routes where there was least danger. But when the exiles had settled down at Jerusalem or in its neighbourhood, they could hardly escape fighting. Their neighbours, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, were precisely those who had suffered in the never-forgotten reigns of David and Solomon, and who had been overjoyed by the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jewish nation. In part, the inhabitants of what had been northern Israel entertained the same sentiments of hostility to the returning Jews; but it is evident that there was here a mixture of sentiments; the Samaritans (to use the familiar name) showed the diversity in the strain of their blood<sup>1</sup> by diversity of sentiments. The Samaritans mentioned in the papyri of Elephantinè (407 B.C.)

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Kings xvii. 24, for the action of the king of Assyria, after he had carried off large numbers of the ten tribes to Assyria and Media, in colonising northern Israel with Cuthæans, &c. But after all, most of the northern Israelites were left in their own land.

were not anti-Jewish in sentiment. But no doubt there were Samaritans who were anti-Jewish. In any case, the small community of Jews who established themselves at Jerusalem during the closing years of the reign of Cyrus soon found that they had to fight for their tenure of that city and its surroundings. The fifty-third psalm is one that mentions this ; it is practically the same as the fourteenth psalm ; but I will quote the fifty-third by preference, because it has a clause which has accidentally dropped out of the other psalm. Here it is :

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity ; there is none that doeth good.

God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek after God.

Every one of them is gone back ; they are together become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge ? Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon God.

There were they in great fear, where no fear was : for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee ; thou hast put them to shame, because God hath rejected them.

Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion ! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

It is clear that when that psalm was written the captivity was not absolutely at an end ; that the people of God were under the necessity of fighting against heathen enemies, if not for their existence, at all events for their liberty. The enemies are marked as heathen, not Israelite, by the phrase that they "eat up my people."

But where did that fighting take place ? (The fourteenth psalm is less clear than the fifty-third as to the fact of this fighting, for it leaves out the clause "for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee" ; but the clause is needed to make the psalm intelligible.) It is not easy to think that such fighting would take place in Babylonia, where imperial armies would always be at hand (for against these the Jews could not contend). But when the return had begun, when a few thousand of the Jews were claiming for themselves their old city of Jerusalem and the surrounding territory, then fighting would begin ; not so much because the Jews were driving out actual holders of the ground, but because their antecedent history and their exalted national pride made them unpopular with the surrounding nations, and their resumption of the ancient



capital of their race would emphasise the suspicion under which they lay. We may be sure that Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites would be on the alert when this began to take place, and would do their best to prevent the Jews becoming again a power in the world; and the Samaritans, under their half-heathen leaders, might on occasions join in against the Jews. The fighting that resulted from such a motive would not be very thorough-going or very determined, but it would be incessant and harassing; and sometimes one side, sometimes the other, would obtain the advantage. At the time when the psalm just quoted was written, the Jews had the advantage; but this was by no means always the case, as we shall see.

The psalm just quoted gathers together in one the evidence that the period when the psalm was written was the period of the captivity (though after the first beginning of the return), and that fighting was taking place between the people of God and heathen enemies, and that in all probability that fighting took place not in Babylonia but in Judæa.

It is desirable to show the support which other psalms give to the reality of the situation thus described. In the ninth and tenth psalms, the iniquity of "the nations" is the prominent theme; and in contrast to the nations, the "needy," the "poor," and the "meek" are represented as the objects of God's favour, who are hoping for divine deliverance. The ninth psalm ends with the words:

Arise, Jehovah: let not man prevail: let the nations be judged in thy sight.

Put them in fear, Jehovah: let the nations know themselves to be but men.

And the tenth psalm ends in this way:

Jehovah is king for ever and ever; the nations are perished out of his land.

Jehovah, thou hast heard the desire of the meek: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that man which is of the earth may be terrible no more.

The title<sup>1</sup> to the ninth psalm declares it to have been written by David, and no doubt the title is intended to apply to the tenth psalm also, for these psalms are in one vein. But the situation does not at all suit the time of David; the powerful wicked men who are not Israelites, and whose downfall the

<sup>1</sup> Concerning the titles to the psalms, and the reasons for holding them to be entirely untrustworthy, see the second Appendix to the present chapter.

psalmist desires, are in close neighbourhood to the people of God, with ready access to their villages (Psalm x. 8); the struggle has much of the aspect of civil war. Now this feature was not in the least present in the wars of David against Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites; nor could David in those wars have truly described himself as needy, poor, and meek. But the situation is exactly that which (if the account which I am giving be based on a true conception) existed in Judæa and Jerusalem, when the exiles from Babylon began to arrive there; they were needy and poor, and more or less meek; and they lived in the close neighbourhood of powerful enemies. This is exactly the situation described in the ninth and tenth psalms.

Precisely the same situation is described in the fifty-ninth psalm; the enemies there are heathen, but heathen in close proximity to the people of God. Thus the psalmist cries (verse 5):

O Jehovah, God of hosts, the God of Israel, arise to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors.

They return at evening, they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.

And again:

Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power, and bring them down, O Lord our shield.

That psalm, again, is in its title ascribed to David: "when Saul sent," so the title runs, "and they watched the house to kill him." But whatever might be the case with some of the servants of Saul, such as the Edomite Doeg, the contest between Saul and David was a contest between Israelite and Israelite: the psalm of which I am writing brings before us a contest between heathen and Israelite, close neighbours to each other. There was no time in the history of Israel (at any rate from the time of Samuel onwards) when such close neighbourhood and yet vehement antipathy was possible except when the return from the Babylonian exile was in its beginnings.

Take another psalm, the forty-fourth. Here we find the people of God discomfited before their enemies, and yet maintaining in the strongest terms their own religious faithfulness. Thus the psalmist cries out and complains to God:

But now thou hast cast us off, and brought us to dishonour, and goest not forth with our hosts.

Thou makest us turn back from the adversary: and they which hate us spoil for themselves.



Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat ; and hast scattered us among the nations....

All this is come upon us ; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant....

If we have forgotten the name of our God, or spread forth our hands to a strange god ;

Shall not God search this out ? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

Yea, for thy sake we are killed all the day long ; and are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

Such confident assertion of innocence, combined with acknowledged external misfortune, would have been impossible at any period before the Babylonian captivity ; but it exactly suits the position of the exiles who had returned from Babylon, in their first weakness before the surrounding nations. It should be noticed that in none of these psalms is any royal tyrant mentioned (the "mighty man" of the fifty-second psalm is hardly royal) ; and hence these psalms give no support to the idea, which some have favoured, that some of the psalms in this early part of the collection are of the date of Antiochus Epiphanes (about 170 B.C.).

It will be right here to refer to those psalms, among the eighty-nine which are my present theme, which have an air of belonging to the reigns of David or of Solomon ; though they would at any rate be expanded from anything written in those early days. I have already mentioned the eighteenth and fifty-first ; to these may be added the twenty-first, the forty-fifth, the forty-eighth, the sixty-eighth, and the seventy-second. I would not speak dogmatically ; but at any rate I exclude these psalms from the remarks which I am making about the first eighty-nine psalms ; the tone of them is too much the tone of triumph (except in the case of the fifty-first psalm). On the other hand, the mention of "the king" in the sixty-first and sixty-third psalms does not seem to me to exclude it from the period which I have named ; for an ideal king was certainly among the conceptions of the restored Jews (and this might even warrant the placing of the seventy-second psalm in the period of which I am now treating).

But I come to another point—the mention of the temple in these eighty-nine psalms. It is mentioned very distinctly in Psalms v. xi. (it may possibly be metaphorical here, but I think not), xxiii. xxvi. xxvii. xxix. xxxvi. xlii. lii. lv. lxv. lxvi. lxix. lxxiv. lxxix. lxxxiv. ; either simply as the temple, or as the house of God, or (in Psalm lxxiv.) by expressions equally

clear. If somewhat vaguer expressions ("thy holy hill," "thy holy oracle," &c.) are added, we have mention of it in Psalms iii. xv. xx. xxiv. xxviii. xliii. lxiii. lxxiii. lxxx. (in the expression "thou that dwellest between the cherubim"). It will be conceded that, when these psalms were written, there was a temple at Jerusalem; which implies, if the chronology which I am following be correct, that there was a temple built shortly after the earliest return of the exiles in the time of Cyrus, which was destroyed some half a century later; the destruction being mentioned certainly in the seventy-fourth psalm, probably in the seventy-ninth (though it is *possible* to take the seventy-ninth psalm as referring to the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar).

And now let me ask: Is it improbable that there should be such a temple, not referred to in the direct history? Is it not certain that the Jews would erect a temple, if they could possibly do so? It is true that in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, they were prohibited from rebuilding the temple (Ezra iv. 7-24); but then they had tried to combine it with rebuilding the walls; it does not follow that objection would have been made to their rebuilding the temple, if that had been all. The walls were the offence; and hence when royal favour came to them at last in the reign of Darius Nothus, they did as a matter of fact rebuild the temple before they rebuilt the walls. If, again, it be said, Why have we no historical record of this brief-lived temple? the answer is that the Jews never did like recording in detail the times of their adversity. We have absolutely no historical record of what they were doing during the Babylonian captivity; and the times immediately succeeding to the captivity had too much that was distressing to be a pleasing subject of record. At the same time, they were not voiceless (if my view be correct) during the times immediately succeeding to the captivity; they could sing their troubles and their hopes; whereas during the actual captivity they had been voiceless, or nearly so. Conflict, even if sometimes disastrous, rekindled the energies of their soul, so that they could utter their feelings in words.

I have said that the reign of Xerxes (485-465 B.C.) was not a happy time for the Jews; and though the book of Esther (taken in connexion with the historical feast of Purim) no doubt truly represents a certain escape of the Jews from imminent peril at that time, we must also be of opinion that that book exaggerates the triumph of the Jews over their enemies. Such exaggeration



is natural to man, and was particularly natural to the Jews, as we may see from the book of Judith (and also from certain parts of the books of Chronicles to which I have before referred).

However, some successes the Jews must have had; in the long conflict which they were waging, there would be moments of encouragement even before the turn of the tide in their favour, which took place in the reign of Darius Nothus; and the sixty-sixth psalm contains a reference to the exile, with an interesting train of ethical thought, showing that the Jews had profited by their misfortunes, without any admixture of despondency. Here are some verses from it:

For thou, O God, hast proved us; thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.

Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laydest a sore burden upon our loins.

Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but thou broughtest us out into abundance.

The position of that psalm would seem to indicate that it was written in the early years after the exile was over; and there is no real reason against our thinking so. The temple, and sacrifices, are referred to in it; yet the authors of these psalms, whoever they may have been, had no slavish devotion to sacrifices. The fiftieth psalm is as emphatic an assertion of the superiority of prayer and thanksgiving over sacrifice, as anything in Isaiah or Micah. So likewise is the sixty-ninth psalm:

I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

And it shall please Jehovah better than an ox, or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

None the less was the author of that psalm enthusiastic on behalf of the temple. "The zeal of thy house," he writes, "hath eaten me up." Moreover, in the midst of all suffering, he looks forward to the time when the imperfect restoration of God's people which then had been attained should be made complete and full:

For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah; and they shall abide there, and have it in possession.

I do not think that any one who reads the psalms carefully will doubt that their order is in the main chronological; there may be exceptions to this, and the more ancient elements in the book, those which came down from the reigns of David or Solomon, would naturally interfere with the general sequence; but on

the whole the psalms down to the eighty-ninth inclusive show the Jews at the time of their severest struggle with adverse circumstances; from the ninetieth psalm onwards there is distinct recovery. All this is in favour of the view that I am here propounding, that the destruction of the temple, described in the seventy-fourth and seventy-ninth psalms, is the destruction of a post-captivity temple, earlier than that of Zerubbabel. There is little doubt of this, I think, as far as the seventy-fourth psalm is concerned. The author of that psalm says: "We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet"; a complaint which would not have been true when the temple of Solomon was burnt by the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar. Nor were there at that time synagogues, which are referred to in the original Hebrew of this psalm (though not in the Septuagint version of it).

The eighty-ninth psalm, the last of those with which I have so far been dealing, is a sad expostulation with God for his delay in coming to the relief of his servants; yet not a faithless expostulation, or in any way a denial of the past sins of Israel; still, an expostulation. We may, without any improbability, suppose it written in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus; when everything seemed at a standstill; and though those incessant attacks, which had wearied the Jews on their first return to Judæa, no longer went on, still nothing seemed positively gained: hope had no tangible ground to rest on. But a better day was soon to dawn, and very soon we shall no longer be dependent on the psalms as our only landmarks of history.

Yet I must linger a little longer upon the psalms. The eighty-fourth psalm cannot be in its right place; but it is not easy to say whether it should be earlier or later than where we find it. But the eighty-fifth psalm is the true introduction to the happier state of things; its proper place would be after the eighty-ninth psalm, and before the ninetieth. It deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

Jehovah, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin.

Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine indignation against us to cease.

Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

Wilt thou not quicken us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?



Show us thy mercy, Jehovah, and grant us thy salvation.

I will hear what Jehovah our God will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly.

Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth springeth up out of the earth; and righteousness hath looked down from heaven.

Yea, Jehovah shall give that which is good, and our land shall yield her increase.

Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set us in the way of his steps.

Can there be a more beautiful expression of penitence, hope, and trust, without any undue confidence or boasting, than this? We may conceive of it as the immediate prelude to the return of Zerubbabel, with the full favour of the Persian monarch, Darius Nothus. To this return I now come, but let me make one parenthetical remark first. It is the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem of whom I have been speaking throughout this chapter; but we must not forget that there were Jews remaining at Babylon, and also in other parts of the Persian empire, who were not to be despised or censured as recreants, but retained in full the clear faith of Abraham, of Moses, and of the prophets. These Jews had literary opportunities much exceeding those of their brethren in Judæa and Jerusalem, who were battling for their very existence, and whose only literary work was breathing out their souls in lyrical psalms. The Jews in Babylonia were called to quite another kind of work. They had, as far as we can tell, a fairly quiet existence; and they set themselves to gather into one narrative the past history of the Israelite people. The past glories of Israel, the intercourse of Jehovah with his people, were never out of their minds; and they set themselves to record it all—a literary work of the greatest compass. They had plenty of materials before them, for Israel had always been a literary people; and slowly now began to be constructed in their present form that long series of books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the books of Samuel, the books of Kings. With the second book of Kings, with the narrative of the destruction of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Babylonian exile, this history terminated; the Jewish historians did not care to go beyond that point; the glories of Israel came to an end when Israel was carried away from the land which God had given them; the years of shame and punishment might fitly be buried in silence. This

great historical work must have been completed some time in the fifth century, we do not know exactly when.

But it is to the history of Zerubbabel and his successors that I am coming now, and for this there are needed quite a different set of historical documents; the books of Ezra and Nehemiah; the first book of Esdras (the first of those books which are called the Apocrypha); and in due course the *Antiquities* of Josephus, book XI. cc. 7 and 8: and with all these must be compared the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, which relate not only to the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel, but also (in Zechariah's prophecies) to the subsequent history; and lastly, the Aramaic papyri recently discovered at Assuan in Egypt must be placed in their proper relation to the authorities previously mentioned, which have been known from time immemorial. In the fitting together of all these diverse authorities some skill is necessary, for to bring them into agreement with one another is not altogether plain sailing; but I shall hope to reserve the most difficult arguments for the Appendix; in the present chapter I will try to give plain narrative.

One remark I may make at starting about the first book of Esdras. It is probably the translation of a lost Hebrew original; and Sir Henry Howorth has ably argued<sup>1</sup> that it is of higher value than our book of Ezra. I cannot go quite so far; but it seems to me more nearly equal in authority to the book of Ezra than is generally supposed. And there is this very noteworthy point in it. The inference which every one would draw at once from the book of Ezra, if chapters ii. 1-iv. 5 were excluded from that book, that Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple during the reign of Darius Nothus, or between the years 422-418 B.C., is much more immediately to be drawn from the first book of Esdras; for in the first book of Esdras Zerubbabel is stated to have returned from Babylon to Jerusalem *for the first time* in the reign of Darius, and the sequence of the kings in the book makes it clear that this is Darius Nothus. Notwithstanding this, the writer of the first book of Esdras had not been able wholly to escape the influence of the belief which connected Zerubbabel with the return under Cyrus, and this belief dominates the latter part of his fifth chapter (from verse 47

<sup>1</sup> The observations on this subject by Sir Henry Howorth (whose great merit I am glad to see recognised by the American Professor Torrey) are to be found in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vols. XXIII. and XXIV. and in the columns of the *Academy* and of the *Thinker* (which last I have not seen) and possibly in other places.



onwards) and is implied in a single verse (the 18th) of his sixth chapter. I follow, however, the main tenor of the first book of Esdras, which also is the true purport of the book of Ezra.

It is probable that, even towards the close of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, there had been some softening on the part of the chief statesmen of Persia towards the struggling Jewish settlers in Jerusalem and Judæa. But it was in the first year of the king who followed this Artaxerxes (i.e. Darius Nothus) that Zerubbabel and his large company departed from Babylon and came to Jerusalem, and it was in the second year of this Darius that the rebuilding of the temple began<sup>1</sup>. It would seem that even then, the hostile neighbours of the Jews made a last effort to prevent the rebuilding of it. But the hostility was much less bitter than it had been; and we are told that the actual decree of Cyrus, permitting the rebuilding of the temple, was found by king Darius at Ecbatana, and no more obstacle was put in the way of the Jewish rebuilders.

And now we come to undisputed contemporary authority as to what happened during the rebuilding; the authority of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai comes slightly the first. We learn from him that at the beginning of the sixth month of the second year of Darius, the rebuilding of the temple had not been started, the Jewish nobles having been occupied in repairing and adorning their own houses. Let me quote the passage:

Thus speaketh Jehovah Sabaoth, saying, This people say, It is not the time for us to come, the time for Jehovah's house to be built. Then came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your cieled houses, while this house lieth waste?...Thus saith Jehovah Sabaoth: Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith Jehovah. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow it away. Why? saith Jehovah Sabaoth. Because of mine house that lieth waste, while ye run every man to his own house. Haggai i. 2-4, 7-9.

Observe, Haggai does not refer to any help in money or materials which Darius was supplying to the Jews; they are themselves to go up to the mountain, and bring wood from thence for the temple structure. And though it may possibly be true that Darius did at a later date give material help to the Jews in their rebuilding, as would be inferred from Ezra vi. 8, still we must not confidently affirm this; the compiler of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah was, as I have before remarked, not

<sup>1</sup> Ezra iv. 24; 1 Esdras iv. 58-v. 3, vi. 1, 2.

above the use of imagination to decorate his history, and it would seem to him (as to Josephus at a later time) that the favour shown by Persian kings was a real honour to the Jews; and in view of the silence of both Haggai and Zechariah, I hardly believe in this royal grant.

The second chapter of Haggai contains a remarkable passage. The glory of Solomon's temple was a great tradition among the Jews; and the more recent temple, the temple of the first half of our book of Psalms, was blended in memory with Solomon's temple. Now some of the Jews who saw Zerubbabel's new structure beginning to rise made disparaging remarks on its insignificance. As the rebuilding had not been a full month in progress, the new structure was not likely to show much splendour; but Haggai's reply to these murmurers must be quoted:

Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my spirit abode among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desirable things of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

If, as I believe, these words were written in 422 B.C., it was not impossible that some might be present who remembered the temple whose destruction is commemorated in the seventy-fourth psalm, which event I have placed in the reign of Xerxes, perhaps in 483 B.C. But it is not necessary to suppose that the temple so destroyed was a very magnificent one; it had "carved work" (Psalm lxxiv. 7); but it was no doubt exalted in memory, and in the deep darkness of that period many were likely to think that this temple was Solomon's temple, so famed in tradition. We must not suppose that the Jews who murmured dissatisfaction at the small beginnings of Zerubbabel's temple had any accurate measure of comparison with the temple which they may have seen in their boyhood. Indeed, though Haggai says, "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory?" it does not follow that any of those whom he addressed had actually



seen that former house. Haggai would not necessarily know their history ; and a depreciatory comparison of the present with the past was in any case natural enough.

I have quoted the most remarkable passages in the prophet Haggai, but I may add to these his last verse, written when the rebuilding of the temple had been three months in progress, because it shows the exalted hopes which were set on Zerubbabel, as the descendant of the ancient kings of Judah :

In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith Jehovah, and I will make thee as a signet ; for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.

The prophecies of Haggai cover a period of nearly four months ; the prophecies of Zechariah begin about a month before those of Haggai terminate, and extend certainly over more than four years ; but how much longer we cannot say, owing to the absence of dates in the latter part of the book. There is a quaintness of style in him throughout ; but his thoughts are sometimes of great beauty ; and he is distinguished among all the prophets for the quiet assurance with which he regards the divine approval as resting on Jerusalem and on the Jews. Thus in his first chapter he represents Jehovah as saying :

I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the nations that are at ease : for I was but a little displeased, and they helped on the affliction. Therefore thus saith Jehovah : I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies ; my house shall be built in it, saith Jehovah Sabaoth.

Zechariah, like Haggai, is full of confidence in Zerubbabel ; in his fourth chapter he writes thus :

This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith Jehovah Sabaoth. Who art thou, O great mountain ? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain : and he shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it. Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house ; his hands shall also finish it ; and thou shalt know that Jehovah Sabaoth hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things ?

Not less enthusiastic is Zechariah over Joshua the high priest ; twice over does he hail him by the title of " the Branch " (iii. 8 and vi. 12) ; and adds that " he shall build the temple of Jehovah, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne ; and he shall be a priest upon his throne " ; and Zechariah further says, plainly referring to Zerubbabel and Joshua, " The counsel of peace shall be between them both."

From this mention of "the Branch<sup>1</sup>," we see that Zechariah possessed a copy of part (at any rate) of Jeremiah's prophecies; for Jeremiah had twice spoken of "a righteous Branch<sup>1</sup>" as ruling in Judah, and as saving Judah and Israel (Jeremiah xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15, 16). From Jeremiah also then must Zechariah have derived that number of seventy years, during which Jehovah had been angry with his people; it is a round number, and not meant to be exact (compare Zechariah i. 12 with vii. 5). It is to be admitted that Zechariah wrote carelessly; a prophet himself, he preferred setting down the number which had prophetic authorisation, and which was familiar to him; he had no access to chronology, by which the real number (much exceeding seventy) might have been found<sup>2</sup>. To the mass of the Jews the time was simply "these so many years," during which they had fasted in sorrow.

But now Zechariah bids them recover; and beautiful are the phrases in which he announces this. Thus in his eighth chapter he writes:

Thus saith Jehovah Sabaoth: There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes?

And again:

The word of Jehovah Sabaoth came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love truth and peace. Thus saith Jehovah Sabaoth: It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come peoples, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to entreat the favour of Jehovah, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah Sabaoth in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favour of Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah Sabaoth: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

What a conversion of mourning into joy, of humiliation into the far-reaching vistas of hope, is implied in these passages!

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word for "Branch" is the same in both prophets.

<sup>2</sup> The mention of "seventy years," like the mention in Haggai of some who may have seen the former temple, is capable of being used as an argument against my whole chronological scheme. I think I have explained both difficulties; the reader may judge.



Let the reader, after carefully observing the purport of these passages of Zechariah, turn to that part of the book of Psalms which is comprised between the 107th<sup>1</sup> and 138th inclusive, and he will find in almost all these (the 109th psalm excepted) the same kind of tone which animates Zechariah; the tone of relief after affliction, of sorrow for past transgressions, of earnest desire to do right, of joyful trust in God, of hope for the future. One verse alone out of these psalms I will quote here; it is the fourth verse of the 138th psalm:

All the kings of the earth shall give thee thanks, Jehovah, for they have heard the words of thy mouth.

In this verse the universal range of that religion which the Jewish nation were privileged to hold and to preach is intimated as clearly as in the last passage which I quoted from Zechariah. But indeed this whole series of psalms should be read side by side with the first eight chapters of Zechariah; their contents show that they belong to the same period. That period, moreover, was the period of highest excellence of the whole Jewish nation; there were greater individuals among them at other times; but never was the whole nation so great as now.

The point of history which I have now reached is illustrated in a remarkable manner by the Aramaic papyri which were discovered a few years ago (to be exact, in 1907) in an island of the Nile, near Assuan in Upper Egypt. We learn from one of these papyri, that in the year 419 B.C. (which is just a year later than the date of the last passage which I quoted from the prophet Zechariah), king Darius sent to instruct the Jews of Egypt as to the manner of keeping the passover; an act which Eduard Meyer<sup>2</sup> (at page 92 of his work *Der Papyrusfund von Elephantine*) justly considers most remarkable. Is not this well-ascertained fact a strong corroboration of the statements in the first book of Esdras, that the Darius who came after one king Artaxerxes and before another king Artaxerxes (and who therefore was Darius Nothus) took a great personal interest in the Jews; does it not add to the probability that it was he who sent Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem?

And now I come to the year 418 B.C., the sixth year of Darius

<sup>1</sup> This splendid psalm (the 107th) would appear to commemorate the journey of Zerubbabel to Jerusalem. The 118th psalm may probably celebrate the dedication of the temple by Zerubbabel.

<sup>2</sup> I must not implicate this distinguished scholar with my own way of regarding the history. Meyer takes the ordinary view that Zerubbabel (and therefore Haggai and Zechariah) lived in the reign of Darius son of Hystaspes; and therefore a century earlier than the date I have assigned to them.

Nothus. In this year the temple which had been begun in 422 B.C., was completed and dedicated, as we read in Ezra vi. 15, 16. Following our book of Zechariah in its proper order, we come to the ninth chapter; and as the eighth chapter had referred to the year 420 B.C., it is not unnatural that the ninth chapter should refer to the year 418 B.C.; and so from its contents I infer that it does. Here is the passage which I mean:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation: lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Christian readers are so accustomed to give a Christian interpretation to these words, that they are apt to forget that the prophet who wrote them, who was so keenly interested in Jerusalem, in the temple, and in the men of his own day, must have been referring to contemporaries, and to some contemporary event. Were there not contemporaries, was there not a contemporary event, likely to call forth the words that I have quoted? Yes: the dedication of the temple was such an event; Zerubbabel and Joshua (or Jeshua—the form of the name varies) were such persons. I have already quoted from Zechariah the exalted terms in which he speaks of Zerubbabel and Joshua: I do not doubt that it is Zerubbabel whom he here speaks of as “thy king”; for Zerubbabel was a descendant of the ancient kings of Judah. The words just quoted plainly refer to some procession. Would not a procession be a natural preliminary to the dedication of the temple? Must we not conclude, in view of the fact that all the preceding chapters of Zechariah were written while the temple was being rebuilt, and have frequent references to that rebuilding, so this ninth chapter describes the dedication after it had been rebuilt? That is the natural sequence of the prophecy, and I know no reason why it should not be regarded as the true one.

But this ninth chapter of Zechariah contains other topics, most natural to be dwelt on at the time of the consummation of so much labour, when the fruit was being gathered in of the years of long endurance and faithfulness. Judah and Ephraim or, in one word, Israel—are declared to be very great and victorious among the peoples of the earth. Naturally the prophet does not include Persia among the nations in comparison with which Judah and Israel shine out as preeminent; for Persia was the sovereign country under whose protection Judah and Ephraim alike lived, and the then king of Persia had been most friendly



to the Jews: but all the other neighbouring countries—Tyre, Philistia, Greece, Assyria, Egypt—are mentioned as about to dwindle before Israel. The mention of Greece (Javan) in this connexion is especially noticeable. A century before this time, in the beginning of the reign of Darius son of Hystaspes, Greece had been comparatively little known among eastern nations; so that when this same Darius son of Hystaspes heard that the Athenians had burned the city of Sardis, he asked, “Who are the Athenians?” But in the reign of Darius Nothus, in 418 B.C., the Athenians, the Spartans, and the other principal Greek States, were known to be warlike and powerful; not without glory had the great battles of Marathon, Salamis, and Plataea been fought and won. So Zechariah, living in this latter reign, might well reckon Greece among the States which were powerful and yet about to yield to the united strength of Judah and Ephraim.

But what did Zechariah mean by Ephraim? Rather let me ask, what should he mean by it but the people inhabiting the country once inhabited by the northern Israelites? It may be said as an objection to this, that the people who in the time of Zechariah inhabited that country, or in other words the Samaritans, were not of true Israelite blood at all, and were besides consistent enemies of the Jews. Those who attend to the evidence will, I think, reverse such a judgment, if they should happen traditionally to have held it. Afterwards, but not now, were the Samaritans hostile to the Jews. The racial question must, however, first be inquired into: is it true that the Samaritans were not of Israelite blood? I said, early in the present chapter, that the Samaritans were of mingled blood (compare 2 Kings xvii. 24 with Jeremiah xli. 4); but I now add that the predominant strain in their blood was, after all, Israelite. Whether we look to the fact that the Samaritans in the after history were as strictly monotheistic as were the Jews, and practised circumcision as faithfully as the Jews did; or at the comparatively small number (some 27,000) which Sargon in his inscriptions claims to have transported to Assyria; we must conclude that it was the nobles, the wealthy, and the priestly class in Samaria who were thus transported, but not the commonalty. Hence by far the greater number of the inhabitants of the Samaritan country were true Israelites; and their sentiments towards the Jews would be of a mingled nature, capable of being turned to friendship or to hostility according to the trend of events.

That the Samaritan leaders, being of foreign blood, should have joined with other races in trying to hinder the Jews from rebuilding their walls and temple in the reign of Artaxerxes I, as narrated in Ezra iv. 7-24, cannot surprise us. But I incline to think that the help which in Ezra iv. 1, 2, they are said to have offered to Zerubbabel is a true fact (though misplaced where it stands in the narrative) and was meant in a genuinely friendly sense; and though Zerubbabel mistrusted it (and thereby probably missed a great opportunity), we have reason to say that the disposition of the Samaritans towards the Jews was not at once turned to positive enmity.

What reason is there for saying this? It lies in a certain incident which took place in the year 407 B.C. We know from the Aramaic papyri recently discovered near Assuan (to which I referred just now) that in that year the Jews in the island of Elephantinè near Syene (now called Assuan) desired to obtain leave to rebuild their own temple in Elephantinè (which had been violently destroyed by their enemies); and in order to obtain leave, they wrote petitions *both* to Bagohi, the governor of Judæa at that time, *and* to Delaja and Schelemja, sons of Sinuballit, the governor of Samaria. Moreover the answer to these Jews of Elephantinè came in a letter jointly written by Bagohi and Delaja. The governor of Judæa, and a son of the governor of Samaria (acting, it must be supposed, on behalf of his father) make answer conjointly to a request made by these Egyptian Jews; and, in the main, give permission for what is asked. Could these two important officials have acted together if the states which they represented had been at bitter enmity with each other? It is impossible. Therefore, in the year 407 B.C. the enmity between Jews and Samaritans as such, which raged so bitterly afterwards, had not yet begun. Moreover, it has been remarked by Lidzbarski and by Meyer (*Der Papyrusfund von Elephantinè*, pp. 86 *sqq.*) that while the petition of the Jews of Elephantinè is in the main granted, they are not permitted to offer whole burnt offerings in their temple when rebuilt; which they had done previously. The most reasonable account to be given of the refusal of this part of their request (for they had explicitly asked to be allowed to sacrifice these whole burnt offerings) is that the Jews of Jerusalem wished to mark the inferiority of the temple at Elephantinè to their own temple at Jerusalem. It confirms this view of the matter, that the Jews of Elephantinè had, we find, written previous letters, both to



Bagohi, and also to Jehohanan, the high priest at Jerusalem, and to other important Jews there, with the same request as that in the letter which has been discovered; but had received no answer. Clearly the Jews at Jerusalem found the request rather a difficult one to deal with; and this makes it the more striking that they should have taken counsel with the Samaritans as to the answer to give to it.

Up to the year 407 B.C. then, there had been no fatal breach between Jews and Samaritans. I have said nothing about the death of Zerubbabel; no inference can be drawn from the Bible as to the year in which it took place; it is likely that Bagohi succeeded him (and at any rate Bagohi held the same office). So also it is likely that Jehohanan succeeded Jeshua as high priest; which it is true is not what we should gather from Nehemiah xii. 10 or from Josephus, *Antiquities*, book xi. c. 5; but we must be prepared for omissions in these ancient records<sup>1</sup>.

Though, as I have said, the feud between Jews and Samaritans had not begun in 407 B.C., it cannot have been long after this that it began. I have spoken of the ardour with which Zechariah, in his ninth chapter, looked forward to the union of Judah and Ephraim, and their united victorious career. The same tone is continued in his tenth chapter:

"I will strengthen the house of Judah" cries the prophet, speaking in God's name, "and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again, for I have mercy upon them; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am Jehovah their God, and I will hear them. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine; yea, their children shall see it, and rejoice; their heart shall be glad in Jehovah."

Judah and Ephraim are to be united, and in their union are to be all-powerful; that is Zechariah's message in his ninth and tenth chapters. Alas! in his eleventh chapter all is changed. It is not easy to interpret everything which the prophet says in this chapter; but his main theme is plain; there has been misgovernment, and the result of it is disruption and disaster. I will quote his main metaphor; it occurs in three verses which are not continuous, but the meaning is obviously continuous:

And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Grace<sup>2</sup>, and the other I called Union<sup>2</sup>; and I fed the flock... And I took my staff Grace, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made

<sup>1</sup> See further remarks on this point in the first Appendix to this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> In our versions, "Beauty" and "Bands." In the margin of our Revised Version, "Graciousness" and "Binders," or "Union." On the whole, "Grace" and "Union" seem to me to express best the intention of the original.

with all the peoples. . . . Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Union, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. Zechariah xi. 7, 10, 14.

From these words we perceive that a tragedy has taken place. When did it happen? How did it happen?

It was indeed a tragedy; not indeed known for such by the Jews themselves, either in that age or at any time afterwards, up to the present day; for a conflict was taking place in which the narrower party were victorious, and the whole character of the Jews was narrowed thereby. That was the result which evoked the poignant reproaches of Zechariah. He would have had Judah and Ephraim—Jews and Samaritans—take each other to their hearts as friends and allies; but there were others who did not desire this consummation, and these others were victorious.

The direct Biblical history says nothing about the conflict to which I have referred until the arrival of Ezra at Jerusalem in the year 398 B.C., and even then glosses it over as far as possible; we see from the book of Ezra that it must have taken place (for human nature does not suffer the tearing asunder of the most sacred ties without some resistance); and the book of Nehemiah has a few sentences which show that it did take place. But the book of Nehemiah would not, if taken alone, give any idea of the vehemence and duration of the quarrel which, in the fourth century before Christ, tore asunder the Jews of Jerusalem. It is Josephus alone<sup>1</sup> from whom we learn this; and it is plain that Josephus had sources of information which are at present wanting to us. Moreover, though Josephus is capable of dealing with evidence in a very arbitrary way, his narrative in that part of his history to which I now refer does so distinctly supply a gap, and has so large an intrinsic probability, that we cannot but accept it as truth, at least in its main purport and effect.

I return now to the situation in Judæa and Jerusalem as it existed about the end of the reign and the life of Darius Nothus. That is, I think, about the time when the eleventh chapter of Zechariah must have been written. For it was a time of trouble in Persia: Egypt had revolted and had been lost; there was a struggle impending as to who should be king of Persia after Darius; and it was a time when trouble might naturally arise in Judæa also. The two contending parties within the Jewish

<sup>1</sup> *Antiquities*, book XI. cc. 7 and 8.



nation, those who wished the nation to follow with rigid obedience the letter of the divine law, and those who felt within themselves the motions of a wider and more generous spirit, were face to face; but we must infer from the words of Zechariah that the narrower party were even then winning the day. This, as we have seen, was a grief to Zechariah; but his prophecy, clear and intelligible up to the point which I have reached, becomes difficult afterwards; the thoughts are full of a kind of perplexed patriotism, and are tender too, but what their precise mark is one can hardly say.

The victory of the narrower party was at last secured by the mission of Ezra. He came, sent by Artaxerxes Mnemon, who was then in the seventh year of his reign; about 398 B.C. was the date of Ezra's coming to Jerusalem. He came to draw a fence round the Jewish nation; a fence prohibitive of friendly intercourse with the nations round them; a fence which barred the way to that ideal toward which every noble impulse of the Jewish nation tended, the ideal of a world friendly to Israel, obedient to God. Though the Samaritans are not named in the four chapters of the book of Ezra which contain Ezra's personal narrative, we cannot doubt that he reckoned them with Moabites, Edomites, and Ammonites, as a nation with whom the Jews were not on any account to hold intimate intercourse.

He came to Jerusalem with a large troop of followers; and at once held a conference with the chief men, doubtless those of the severer party. They told him (what can hardly have been news to him), that many marriages had taken place between the Jews and the neighbouring nations; on hearing which he says: "I plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished." So he sat all day till the time of the evening oblation (he was in the temple); and a great congregation of men and women and children gathered about him, as was natural; for he was a great man, and the people of Jerusalem knew that something important was going to take place. Then at last he fell on his knees, and with tears and blushes (as he tells us) he confessed to God this most grievous sin of the people of Judah, that many of them had married women from the abominable races who lived round them.

Far must we be from sympathising with his tears, his blushes, and his confession. It is curious to think that he would have absolutely prohibited the marriage of Boaz with Ruth. Possibly the writer of the book of Deuteronomy would also have prohibited

that marriage (xxiii. 3) ; but we cannot be certain of his meaning ; and the book of Deuteronomy is mild compared with Ezra. By Ezra, not only were such marriages prohibited in the future, but those then existing were annulled. The last chapter of Ezra relates how this lawgiver of Judah compelled every Jew who had married a non-Jewish wife to send that wife away, and not only that wife but the children he had had by her. This stringent measure was not of course carried out in its full scope immediately, and it is clear that those who were not in the highest station were often, perhaps generally, able to conceal the fact that their wives were foreigners ; but there was no open resistance to the decree.

Let us say what can be said for Ezra. He was a strong man ; his narrowness gave him strength. It is probable that (in spite of the noble prophet Zechariah) the greater number of those in Judah who desired the broadening of the religious rule under which they lived, desired it for selfish reasons, without any proper care for the preservation of the religious faith which they had received, or for the welfare of the entire community. Ezra was at any rate not selfish ; and he introduced order and rule into the Jewish nation, though not an order and a rule by any means wholly to be approved of. The absolute severance between Jew and Gentile which he enforced was a real calamity to the Jewish people in the after ages. Still, some caution on the part of the Jews, in their intermarriage with foreigners, was at that time desirable. The Jews were carrying down to their posterity and to all mankind a treasure of great value, the knowledge of God through personal experience, and especially the perception that the highest morality of man is sustained and strengthened by God. It was quite possible that this treasure might be made more fruitful, and might gather for itself a larger area on which to expand, by the nation intermarrying with foreigners. On the other hand, such intermarriage, if carried on without forethought and religious feeling, might result in corruption of the religious ideal, and disregard of the religious spirit. Against this latter danger Ezra was guarding, but in a temper that might almost be called one of panic ; and at any rate the annulling of existent marriages was a step wholly indefensible.

The immediate sequel might almost lead one to think, though I do not believe it would be a true inference, that the measures of Ezra led to actual fighting between the Jews and their



neighbours. Thirteen years after Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem, another person, enjoying quite equal consideration with Ezra, and sent by the same Persian king Artaxerxes, arrived on an important errand; namely, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This was Nehemiah, who had been cupbearer to king Artaxerxes, and whose zeal for the rebuilding of the walls had been kindled by a message from Jerusalem which he had received while actually serving the king. The message ran thus:

The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall also of Jerusalem is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. Nehemiah i. 3.

This sounds like the narration of a recent calamity; but if anything so serious as the entire destruction of the walls of Jerusalem had happened during the thirteen years between the arrival of Ezra and the arrival of Nehemiah, it is very strange that no hint of it should have survived in the writings which we possess. There is, however, an inference that may be fairly drawn from the passage just quoted, and that is that the Jews of Jerusalem had suddenly become sensible that they were in danger from their neighbours. Intermarriage with those neighbours, which had become a common practice, had had a peaceful tendency; Ammonites and Moabites were beginning to look upon the Jews with less dislike than formerly. But when these marriages were rescinded, and when the discarded wives were sent back (as it must be supposed they were) to their places of birth, with their children accompanying them, it may be conceived with what intensity the old unpopularity of the Jews would spring up again; and it is very likely that the neighbouring nations would threaten the Jews with a warlike attack; and the Jews would become suddenly sensible that their city was undefended, in a way in which they had not felt it before. They would send to Nehemiah, who was in great favour with the king; and the result would be what we have seen. It is probable also that they would have another reason for sending to the king's court, namely, to ask for the appointment of a governor; for we see that Nehemiah, when he arrived at Jerusalem, immediately became governor. It is quite possible that he was successor to that Bagohi, who is mentioned in the Assuan papyri as governor of Judæa in the year 407 B.C. (the date of Nehemiah's arrival at Jerusalem being 385 B.C.); but we do not know whether this was the case.

Nehemiah was an energetic man, and the walls of Jerusalem

were actually rebuilt in 52 days. We might possibly doubt this statement, and prefer that of Josephus, who tells us that the walls took two years and four months to rebuild. But Nehemiah must have known the fact (if the narrative ascribed to him be genuine, as I believe it to be); and his statement is the more probable of the two. For the Jews were in urgent need of speed; and we have a parallel instance in the building of the walls of Athens in 477 B.C., when the Athenians were on the alert to forestall opposition on the part of Sparta. We must accept the Biblical statement; and the description (in Nehemiah's personal narrative) of the demeanour of the leading adversaries of the Jews on this occasion is vivid and interesting. Nor was Nehemiah less concerned, and laudably concerned, in saving the poorer Jews from usurious exactions.

But as regards the keeping of the law of the Pentateuch with literal exactness, and as regards the prohibition of marriage with foreigners, Nehemiah was quite at one with Ezra; and his action, perhaps about 360 B.C., produced results even more notable than the action of Ezra in the marriage question. And now I come to the point where we have to rely in great measure on the narrative of Josephus, and some preliminary remarks on this part of his history are necessary.

It is perfectly evident that Josephus made no use at all of our books of Ezra and Nehemiah; the first book of Esdras was, however, a great authority with him; and he had access to some history of Nehemiah, in which Nehemiah's personal narrative was much less pronounced than in our canonical book of Nehemiah. Also Josephus possessed the book of Esther, in a form not very different from that which we find in our Bibles; and he possessed something like our apocryphal book of Esther as well. In fact, in the Bible as Josephus possessed it, Chronicles passed by a direct connexion into the first book of Esdras, which in its turn passed into a brief narrative concerning Nehemiah, and this again passed into the story of Esther, as told both in our Bible and in our Apocrypha. From the Bible which lay before him in this way, Josephus proceeded to draw his own history in the first six chapters of the eleventh book of his *Antiquities*. Now the probability is that all the Biblical books thus named, possessed by Josephus, once existed in Hebrew, and that Josephus possessed them in Hebrew. If so, he found the following Persian kings named in order: Cyrus, Artaxerxes, Darius, Artaxerxes, Ahasuerus. If Josephus only possessed these



books in Greek, Ahasuerus would disappear, and a third Artaxerxes take his place. Whether Josephus possessed them in Hebrew or in Greek, he in either case recognised five Persian kings as being named in them; and he knew enough of secular history to be aware that the first five Persian kings, beginning with Cyrus, were not named as his Biblical authorities named them. Consequently, by a most uncritical procedure, and without giving any warning to his reader of what he was doing, he changed the names of these kings into what he assumed the Biblical writer must have meant; and instead of their names appearing as Cyrus, Artaxerxes, Darius, Artaxerxes, Ahasuerus, they appear in his *Antiquities* as Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes. The result is that he represents Ezra and Nehemiah as living in the reign of Xerxes, or between 485 B.C. and 465 B.C. This is a most extraordinary transformation of history, but Josephus was not at all aware of the pitfalls that lay in his way, and we must not think too badly of him as a historian because, meeting with a historical difficulty, he cut the Gordian knot in a way at which a modern critic must smile. He really had some knowledge, though an inaccurate knowledge, of the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius son of Hystaspes, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes the first, called Longimanus (under whom he places Esther). But of Persian history after Artaxerxes Longimanus, Josephus had very little knowledge indeed.

Yet Josephus was in possession of a document, derived from some quarter unknown to us, which gives us important and even startling information respecting the years between 360 B.C. and 320 B.C. This information is found in the seventh and eighth chapters of the eleventh book of his *Antiquities*. An Artaxerxes, manifestly Artaxerxes Ochus, is mentioned; also a Darius, who is none other than Darius Codomannus, the last of the Persian kings, dethroned by Alexander of Macedon. Part of the narrative contained in these chapters, the reverence paid by Alexander to the Jewish high priest, may fairly be disbelieved; and there seem to be some minor errors. But the first story contained in these chapters is entirely probable; and the second story is supported in its main point by the book of Nehemiah.

The first story runs thus. King Artaxerxes had a minister called Bagoses; who, from the date implied, and from his tyrannical character, is evidently the same as the Bagoas of whom Diodorus tells us—the unscrupulous minister of Artaxerxes Ochus. Now Joiada, the high priest at Jerusalem, had died; his

two sons, Jesus and John, quarrelled for the succession. Bagoses favoured Jesus; but the brothers came to blows in the temple, and John slew Jesus, thus becoming high priest. Bagoses, in great anger, and in spite of the remonstrances of the Jews, entered the most sacred parts of the temple, and for seven years afterwards continued to fine the Jews heavily. No Jew would have invented such a story as this, and we must account it true.

For the second story, let me begin with the book of Nehemiah. In that book the most prominent adversary of Nehemiah is Sanballat, who is called the Horonite, but who is plainly an inhabitant of Samaria, and a very influential inhabitant—though not, as far as the book of Nehemiah tells us, the governor of that province<sup>1</sup>. Josephus does not tell us anything about the early history of Sanballat, but he tells us that he was made governor of Samaria by the last king of Persia, i.e. by Darius Codomannus; and he adds that Sanballat died at an advanced age in the year in which Alexander took Gaza, i.e. 332 B.C. If Sanballat was eighty years old then, he would be about twenty-seven in the year 385 B.C., when Nehemiah came to Jerusalem and rebuilt the walls; after which time unfriendly relations between the two existed continuously. But Nehemiah left Jerusalem in the year 373 B.C. to resume some post at the court of king Artaxerxes Mnemon; and during his absence the Jews reverted to laxer habits; among which sabbath-breaking is mentioned, and also the foreign marriages, which continued in spite of Ezra's stern prohibition of them. Nehemiah, on his return, acted stringently against both these irregularities; and when a son of Joiada, the prospective high priest, actually married a daughter of Sanballat, Nehemiah, in great indignation, banished the offender and his wife<sup>2</sup>. Now this marriage, and the departure of the offender from Jerusalem, is mentioned by Josephus also; though Josephus says it was a grandson of Joiada who married the daughter of Sanballat. We must prefer the authority of the book of Nehemiah in this, and also in the date suggested for the event; for it could hardly have happened later than 360 B.C., whereas from Josephus it would appear to have happened a quarter of a century after that. It is impossible, however, to doubt that the book of Nehemiah

<sup>1</sup> He is no doubt a namesake of that Sinuballit, who was mentioned a few pages back as friendly to the Jews, on the authority of the Aramaic papyri; but the Sanballat of the book of Nehemiah was very unfriendly to them.

<sup>2</sup> Nehemiah xiii. 28.



and Josephus refer to the same event ; and the value of Josephus here is that he indicates the great importance of the event. It led to the building of the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim ; and also, when once Manasseh (for that was the name of Sanballat's son-in-law) had settled in Samaria, other Jews also who had married foreign wives joined him there. There was from this time forward, for many years, a great drain of valuable citizens from Judæa to Samaria, in consequence of the stringent marriage prohibitions enforced in Judæa, and this was not only in itself a loss to the Jews, but it was what made the bitter quarrel between Jew and Samaritan irremediable. So memorable a fact gives us a true key to the later Jewish history, and a key not found in any other quarter. It is, as far as the Jews are concerned, the great fact of the fourth century before Christ. It put the seal on the narrow legislation of Ezra ; it separated the Jews, finally, from any intimate intercourse with the nations of the world around them. That is a result which we may ponder over ; we may draw lessons for ourselves from it ; but a satisfactory result it was not.

Neither the fault of Ezra, nor that persistent Jewish narrowness which resulted from it, ought to be disguised. But yet, let the reader reflect on the whole story which I have told in the present chapter ; on the long struggle, never yet adequately recognised by historians, which the Jews underwent after they began to return from the Babylonian captivity ; on their successful emergence from that struggle ; and let him say whether the Jews do not appear in it a most noble, most worthy people ? It is true that in the end, when they consolidated their government under Ezra, they fell short of the great ideal which their prophets had foretold as their future heritage. They could not become, as a nation, the evangelists of the world. But they had made great steps in that direction. We may think, perhaps, that it was a needless effort which they made, to get back to Jerusalem from Babylon. On the highest plane of thought, no doubt, it was needless. But we must not demand that every one shall be on the highest plane of thought. The desire to return to Jerusalem was in their lifeblood ; they could not get rid of it ; it was deeply commingled with their trust in God. And how valiantly did they contend for it ! Not, as in the ordinary histories is told, by the help of princes ; Cyrus did not help them at all with money or arms ; even Darius Nothus helped them more by his friendship than by material help ;

and when Darius Nothus came to the throne of Persia, the Jews had gone through the brunt of the battle.

Finally, if it be asked with what degree of confidence I maintain the correctness of the story as I have told it, I answer that, if the narratives given by Josephus in the eleventh book of his *Antiquities*, about those two persons, Bagoses and Manasseh, be substantially true, nothing will prevent the whole story of the Jews after the Babylonian captivity, as I have told it, being substantially true; and I think the narratives in Josephus are true, with some qualifications in detail. For further comments on this subject, I must refer to the first Appendix to this chapter.

After Alexander of Macedon had subdued the Persian empire, the Jews fell first under the dominion of the Ptolemies of Egypt; and the Ptolemies, though not always, yet generally, treated them mildly and equitably. A certain sympathy, amid many difficulties, began to be established between Greeks and Jews. The book of Wisdom, with its Platonic zeal for the doctrine of immortality, has the spirit of this time, though generally held to have been composed in a later century. I do not know to what period we can better refer *Ecclesiastes*, which (like *Wisdom*) is nominally the work of king Solomon. I have been convinced by the recent arguments of Mr J. H. Hart<sup>1</sup> that *Ecclesiasticus* also belongs to the third century; the great initial difficulty of thinking so, the mention in the prologue of the "thirty-eighth year of Euergetes the king" has, it seems to me, been overcome by him successfully. *Ecclesiasticus* is a book full of dignified thought, and though severe, yet philanthropic. The writer hardly believes in the doctrine of immortality. We may regret in him a narrowness towards the Samaritans; and there may be something of the common-place in the book. Yet the common-place may sometimes fitly be spoken, especially when combined with sincere and lofty feeling; and such maxims as the following are not quite common-place:

When a man hath finished, then he is but at the beginning. *Ecclesiasticus* xviii. 7.

Reprove thy neighbour; it may be he said it not; and if he hath said it, that he may not say it again. *Ibid.* xix. 14.

A wise man will be silent till his time come. *Ibid.* xx. 7.

Many literary works, besides those above mentioned, were completed by the Jews in the third century before Christ—probably the "Song of Songs"; certainly the books of *Chronicles*,

<sup>1</sup> In his work on *Ecclesiasticus*.



Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther; and probably the very imaginative books of Tobit and Judith, though it is impossible to express certainty on such a point. The great and profound book of Job seems to me to have a reference all through to the affliction of Israel during the Babylonian captivity, and the restoration of Israel afterwards; hence it might probably have been composed in the fifth century before Christ, and there may be in it even earlier elements. It was in the third century that translations of the Old Testament into Greek began to be written, and Alexandria was the place which initiated this kind of work. Altogether, the third century was on the whole a time of quiet and prosperous labour for the Jews, till near the end of it.

Then the powerful and ambitious Greek kings of Syria half wrested, half filched, the land of Israel from the Ptolemies, and a time of greater trial began; of which my next chapter must tell.

## APPENDIX I TO CHAPTER XIV

### THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE CHAPTERS EZRA II. AND III., TOGETHER WITH SOME OTHER REMARKS BEARING ON THE DATE OF ZERUBBABEL

I AM afraid I cannot avoid an argument of some complexity. I have excluded it from my direct narrative; no reader is *bound* to test my reasons for what I say; but I am bound to give him the means of testing them, if he wishes to do so.

I begin then with the consideration of the two chapters, Ezra ii. and iii.; and my thesis has been that they have no business to be where they are. The same is I think true of the first five, or at any rate the first three, verses of chapter iv.

Let me call attention to the passage, Ezra ii. 70—iii. 2, as compared with Nehemiah vii. 73—viii. 1. I will quote both passages; first, that from Ezra:

So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities. And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon.

Next, that from Nehemiah :

So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinim, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities. And when the seventh month was come, the children of Israel were in their cities. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the watergate ; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel.

It is obvious that the first part of each of these passages, down to the words " as one man," is practically the same ; the latter part is quite different. The passage in the book of Ezra professes to be relating what happened in the reign of Cyrus, about 538 B.C. ; the passage in the book of Nehemiah professes to be relating what happened in the reign of *some* Artaxerxes, and in the twentieth year of that reign ; and as the earliest Artaxerxes began to reign about 464 B.C., the passage in the book of Nehemiah refers to events which took place not earlier than 445 B.C.<sup>1</sup> It would be vain to deny that one of the two passages is copied from the other passage (down to the words " as one man " ) ; how came the copyist to copy what he certainly ought not to have copied, since the events of 538 B.C. could not possibly give him direct information as to what happened a century or a century and a half later ? Up to a certain point the answer is easy ; the writer of the book of Nehemiah has professed to be copying the list of returning exiles which he found in the book of Ezra, which was a perfectly legitimate thing to do ; what was not legitimate was his continuing, after he had got to the end of the list, to quote the history which followed. It seems, on the face of it, a piece of inaccurate bungling ; but we cannot help asking why the historian should bungle in this way. Was it pure accident ? We are certainly justified in asking whether there may not have been a motive for it.

Having this question before us, my next remark is that, whatever we may think of the chapters of Ezra which are my present theme (chapters ii. and iii. and the first five verses of chapter iv.), they were not originally in the position in which they are now. They originally existed as an independent passage ; the compiler of the book of Ezra found them as an independent passage, and inserted them in the place where they are now, because he thought that context suited and required them. We know this, because happily we possess the Greek first book of

<sup>1</sup> In my account of the history, I put these events in the reign of the *second* Artaxerxes, and therefore in the year 385 B.C.



Esdras, which in many respects is another edition of the Hebrew book of Ezra, but which differs from the book of Ezra in some important particulars. One of the differences between the two books lies in the place which they assign to the passage of which I am now speaking. Let the reader compare the two books, and he will see that, while the first book of Esdras has a passage which exactly corresponds to the passage in the book of Ezra (1 Esdras v. 7-73 = Ezra ii. and iii. and iv. 1-5), it is placed in a different context. The passage in the first book of Esdras has a position which corresponds to the position which the passage in Ezra would have had, if it had been put after the end of the fourth chapter of Ezra and just before the fifth chapter. What tends to disguise this difference between the two books from an ordinary reader is the fact that the first book of Esdras interposes, immediately before the list of the returning exiles, a romantic story about Zerubbabel, and especially about Zerubbabel's relations to king Darius; it is a story which does not appear in the book of Ezra, and which we cannot but regard as pure fable; but it diverts attention from the exact order of the narrative in the first book of Esdras. However, the book of Ezra and the first book of Esdras do differ in arrangement here; and it is obvious that the compiler of the book of Ezra, and the compiler of the first book of Esdras, had each of them in his possession the list of the returning exiles and the narrative which immediately follows (i.e. Ezra ii. iii. iv. 1-5 in the one case, 1 Esdras v. 7-73 in the other case), but that they differed in opinion as to the exact place where the list and its sequel should be inserted. The history, apart from this difference (and excluding also the romantic story about Zerubbabel's relations to king Darius), is in the main the same in both books.

I now proceed to make a remark, which I think will be acknowledged to be important. While, if we exclude the passages just mentioned, alike from the book of Ezra and from the first book of Esdras, either book gives a narrative which is perfectly correct as to the order of the Persian kings, though with omission of some important kings, the insertion of the passages disorders the chronology altogether. In the first book of Esdras the disorder consists in this, that a narrative which obviously assumes Cyrus to be the reigning monarch (1 Esdras v. 55, 71, 73) is placed in the middle of the reign of Darius. In the book of Ezra the disorder consists in this, that Zerubbabel, who is represented as returning to Jerusalem in the reign of Cyrus (about 538 B.C.

in our mode of reckoning) and at the head of a large body of followers, is altogether unmentioned through the succeeding reigns, which include those of Ahasuerus (or Xerxes) and of the first Artaxerxes, until he appears again in the reign of Darius (who as following upon Xerxes and the first Artaxerxes must be Darius Nothus) about 422 B.C. as a still vigorous man, and as rebuilding and dedicating the temple.

It will be conceded that neither the compiler of the book of Ezra, nor the compiler of the first book of Esdras, has been happy in the selection of a place in which to insert the passage of which I have been speaking. If any further argument were needed to prove that the passage is interpolated in the first book of Ezra, and does not properly belong to its context, it would be found in the fact that Sheshbazzar, who in the first chapter of Ezra is named as "the prince of Judah" and the leader of the returning exiles, is in the second chapter, which professes to give a list of returning exiles, not even named at all. In the third chapter of Ezra, Zerubbabel and Jeshua appear as leaders; and hence some have supposed that Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel were one and the same person. This supposition is, however, rendered impossible by the fact that in the fifth chapter of Ezra, verses 11-16, in a speech or letter attributed to persons of whom Zerubbabel was one, Sheshbazzar is referred to as an antecedent governor of Judah, who had laid the foundations of the temple in the time of Cyrus, a considerable time previously.

Thus the passage of which I have been speaking (Ezra ii. iii. iv. 1-5 or 1 Esdras v. 7-73) is not at all recommended to us by the facts which we have just discovered about it. Having been in the possession both of the compiler of the book of Ezra, and the compiler of the first book of Esdras, neither of these compilers could find a proper use for it; each of them inserted it in his history, but they inserted it in different places; and neither place suits it at all.

It will now be proper to recall the fact that, besides the apparent impossibility of inserting the passage consistently in the history as we know it, there is also in the middle of it a very curious conjunction of its parts, which may indicate in it an internal weakness also. The second and third chapters of Ezra, which constitute the greater part of the passage on which I am commenting, profess to tell, in the first place, the names and numbers of the Jews who returned to Jerusalem in the reign



of Cyrus (this is in the second chapter), secondly, how these Jews immediately after their return kept the feast of tabernacles, and afterwards began to rebuild the temple (this is in the third chapter). These two portions of the narrative are connected by a few verses, which I have quoted already, but which it will be well for me to quote again :

So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities. And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. Ezra ii. 70-iii. 2.

The peculiarity of these verses is that the first half of them, down to the words "as one man," is repeated again in the book of Nehemiah as descriptive of quite another period of history ; a period, on the most favourable supposition, ninety-three years later than the reign of Cyrus, which is the period to which the book of Ezra here refers. Here, again, is the passage from Nehemiah :

So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinim, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities. And when the seventh month was come, the children of Israel were in their cities. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate ; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel. Nehemiah vii. 73-viii. 1.

The writer of the book of Nehemiah<sup>1</sup> had professed to be copying a catalogue, which catalogue we find in fact just before the words here quoted ; but it is quite evident that if the book of Ezra in its second and third chapters be true history the writer of the book of Nehemiah has copied more than a catalogue ; he has copied also a piece of history appended to the catalogue, and he has made that piece of history, which originally applied to the time of Cyrus, do duty as descriptive of the time of Nehemiah. This, as I remarked at the beginning of this appendix, appears to be a piece of careless bungling. But now let me give the reasons which appear to me conclusive, for believing that the catalogue to which the above verses are appended was not originally intended to be a catalogue of the time of Cyrus at all ; that its true date lies far nearer to the time of Nehemiah ; and

<sup>1</sup> Who is not, in this part, Nehemiah himself. Yet the catalogue, in its main substance, may really have been the one that Nehemiah found.

that, in reality, the catalogue which we find in the second chapter of Ezra was copied from this catalogue, which we now find in the seventh chapter of Nehemiah; that the copying was from the book of Nehemiah to the book of Ezra, and not the other way. If this be so, the bungle lies, not in the book of Nehemiah, but in the book of Ezra. The compiler of the two books was indeed, as I believe, the same person; but the error existed in his materials before he received them—and in that part of his materials which we now know as the passage Ezra ii. iii. iv. 1–5.

In considering the question thus suggested, it is necessary to take the first book of Esdras to aid us. The passages which I have already quoted from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah have their counterparts in the first book of Esdras. The counterpart of Ezra ii. 70–iii. 2 is 1 Esdras v. 46–49; it runs thus:

And the priests and the Levites and they that were of the people dwelt in Jerusalem and the country; the holy singers also and the porters and all Israel in their villages. But when the seventh month was at hand, and when the children of Israel were every man in his own place, they came all together with one consent into the broad place before the first porch which is toward the east. Then stood up Jesus the son of Josedek, and his brethren the priests, and Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, and his brethren, and made ready the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt sacrifices upon it, according as it is expressly commanded in the book of Moses the man of God.

The above passage, like the passages in Ezra and Nehemiah, occurs at the end of the catalogue given in those books; but the last passage that I will quote from the first book of Esdras, the passage which is the counterpart of Nehemiah vii. 73–viii. 1, and which is in fact 1 Esdras ix. 37–39, has no catalogue to precede it, nor would it appear that the compiler of the first book of Esdras found any catalogue preceding it, though we cannot be quite certain on this point; for he may have found such a catalogue, and excluded it as not pertinent to his own narrative. It will not make much difference to us here whether the compiler of 1 Esdras possessed but ignored Nehemiah's personal narrative, with the catalogue which is the sequel of it, or whether he did not possess these documents at all. With this explanation I now proceed to quote 1 Esdras ix. 37–39:

And the priests and the Levites, and they that were of Israel, dwelt in Jerusalem, and in the country, on the new moon of the seventh month, and the children of Israel in their habitations. And the whole multitude were gathered together with one accord into the broad place before the



porch of the temple toward the east ; and they said unto Esdras the priest and reader, Bring the law of Moses, that was given of the Lord, the God of Israel.

This passage stands at the beginning of a narrative which is practically the same as the narrative in the book of Nehemiah, chapter viii. 2-12 ; and it follows a narrative which is practically the same as that of the concluding chapters of the book of Ezra ; the whole personal narrative of Nehemiah being omitted (as I remarked above) in the first book of Esdras. It would seem that the personal narrative of Nehemiah originally existed as a document separate, not only from the book of Ezra, but also from the chapters of Nehemiah from the eighth to the eleventh inclusive.

Now let the reader understand that the crucial point in the present argument is this : Was the passage which tells us how " the priests and the Levites &c., dwelt in their cities " (or in their " villages," or in their " habitations "), and how in the seventh month they all gathered themselves together " as one man " (or " with one consent " or " with one accord ")—a passage which up to a certain point is practically the same in all the four versions of it which I have quoted—originally intended to apply to an incident in the reign of Cyrus, or to an incident in the reign of Artaxerxes and in the time of Nehemiah ? The book of Ezra very distinctly applies it to an incident in the reign of Cyrus, approximately about 538 B.C. The book of Nehemiah, and the last chapter of the first book of Esdras, with equal distinctness apply it to an incident in the reign of Artaxerxes (*some* Artaxerxes—and in the case of the earliest Artaxerxes, the date would be 445 B.C.). But what says the fifth chapter of the first book of Esdras, which is the remaining chapter in which this passage occurs (in verses 46 and 47 of that chapter) ? It may at first sight be thought that the fifth chapter of the first book of Esdras applies the passage to the reign of Cyrus, in spite of the fact that the whole narrative is imbedded in the reign of Darius ; for Cyrus is mentioned as king several times afterwards in the chapter. But let us look more closely into this chapter. Note first the 39th and 40th verses of it, which run thus :

And when the description of the kindred of these men was sought in the register, and was not found, they were removed from executing the office of the priesthood : for unto them said Nehemias and Aththarias, that they should not be partakers of the holy things, till there arose up a high priest wearing Urim and Thummim.

The corresponding verses in the second chapter of Ezra (the 62nd and 63rd) run thus :

These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found : therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim.

It will be seen that "the Tirshatha" in the passage from Ezra corresponds to "Nehemias and Attharias" in the first book of Esdras. Is not then Nehemias (or Nehemiah) the Tirshatha (i.e. the governor), and Attharias another high official—the same doubtless as the Attharates who is mentioned in 1 Esdras ix. 49 as addressing Esdras (i.e. Ezra) and the Levites ? If this be so, the catalogue in 1 Esdras v., and the verses immediately after the termination of the catalogue, are really intended to refer to the time of Nehemiah, and not to the time of Cyrus. It may be added that the title "Tirshatha" is never applied by name to anyone except Nehemiah (and to him the title is applied in Nehemiah viii. 9 and x. 1) ; though of course those who believe that the second chapter of Ezra relates to the time of Cyrus are bound to say that the "Tirshatha" in that chapter means Zerubbabel. But they can give no other instance in which Zerubbabel is called by this title.

It will be admitted that the mention of Nehemias in 1 Esdras v. 40, and the evident fact that he is regarded as the governor at the time to which the incident refers, is strong evidence that the catalogue in this chapter belongs more nearly to the time of Nehemiah and king Artaxerxes than to the time of king Cyrus. Let us see whether the chapter does not supply us with other evidence to this effect. Take the 47th verse of the chapter :

But when the seventh month was at hand, and when the children of Israel were every man in his own place, they came all together with one consent into the broad place before the first porch which is toward the east.

What porch is meant here ? In that other version of this passage which we find in the ninth chapter of this book (verse 38) the porch is explicitly said to be the porch of the temple ; and plainly we must understand the porch of the temple in the fifth chapter also. It is certainly preferable then to regard the fifth chapter as dating from a time when the porch of the temple existed ; which it did not immediately after the return in the reign of Cyrus, but which it did in the time of Nehemiah. This



argument has not equal weight with the argument drawn from the mention of Nehemias in the 40th verse of the chapter, but some weight it has ; for in the time of Cyrus, to which 1 Esdras v. 47 professes to belong, the porch of the temple was in ruins, together with the whole temple ; and if it were mentioned at all, it might be expected that some mention of the fact that it was in ruins would be made. Or, even more probably, it would have been said, "they came altogether with one consent into the broad place before the ruined temple." As there is no mention of so important a fact, but as on the contrary the phrase is practically the same as in verse 38 of the ninth chapter (which refers to a time when the porch of the temple was in existence) ; is not the inference of real weight that the passage in the ninth chapter is the original, the passage in the fifth chapter a copy of it ?

Taking these two facts into account—the mention of Nehemias and Attharias in the 40th verse of the fifth chapter, and the mention of "the first porch which is toward the east" in the 47th verse of the same chapter—is not the inference exceedingly strong that the original intention of the whole passage was to describe something which took place, not in the reign of Cyrus, but in the time of Nehemiah ; and is not the result of this to separate definitely the catalogue itself from the time of Cyrus ? But if so, the inference follows immediately that the catalogue in the second chapter of Ezra is definitely separated from the time of Cyrus ; for this is substantially the same as the catalogue in 1 Esdras v. The compiler of the book of Ezra has been a little more successful than the compiler of the first book of Esdras in concealing the source from which his catalogue was derived ; but the two stand or fall together<sup>1</sup>.

And now let me make the attempt to show how those very critical parts of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah on which I have been commenting—Ezra ii. iii. iv. 1–5 and Nehemiah vii. and viii.—came into being ; and through what influences and under what motives the bungle which I pointed out at the beginning of this Appendix originated. The reader will bear in mind that it is much easier to demonstrate an error than to say how the error arose ; but still within limits I believe that the latter also may be done in the present case.

<sup>1</sup> It is worth mentioning (and the remark is due to the late Dr Driver) that the "seventh month" in Nehemiah vii. 73 is in the right continuance upon the "month Elul" (the sixth month) in Nehemiah vi. 15 : so that Nehemiah vii. 73 appears to be *in situ* where it stands.

In the first place then, I assume the genuineness of the personal narrative of Nehemiah, from the beginning of the book down to the end of the fifth verse of the seventh chapter ; and I assume that the catalogue which occupies nearly the whole of the remainder of the seventh chapter, from the words " The number of the men of the people of Israel " in verse 7 down to the end of verse 69 is (as it professes to be) the catalogue which lay before the eyes of Nehemiah, except the slight additions, in verses 61, 64, and 65, which were inserted owing to Nehemiah himself discovering that certain families were of doubtful descent, whether as Israelites or as priests. How this personal narrative of Nehemiah came to be interposed in the middle of a narrative about Ezra, which in part is a personal narrative of Ezra himself, is a question which need not be discussed here. But it is of importance to know what was the date of the catalogue which Nehemiah tells us that he found, and which he describes as " the book of the genealogy of them which came up at the first," and which we have now before us in the seventh chapter of the book of Nehemiah.

The ordinary view; which places Zerubbabel's return to Jerusalem in 538 B.C., and Nehemiah's return in 445 B.C., places an interval of ninety-three years between the date of the drawing up of the catalogue and the date when Nehemiah made use of it for his own purposes. I cannot but think that an interval of ninety-three years, and those troubled years, as we know from the book of Ezra itself, must have made such a catalogue of very little utility. But according to my view, Zerubbabel returned in 423 B.C., and Nehemiah in 385 B.C. ; and the intervening years, though not without trouble, had not been years of extreme distress ; it is conceivable that a catalogue thirty-eight years old might give Nehemiah real information. I understand that by the phrase " them which came up at the first " is intended " those who came up with Zerubbabel." It is true that, according to my reading of the history, that was not the first return of the Jews from Babylon ; but it was the first fully successful return ; the first return that took place under the favouring influence of a Persian king, and with real promise of a restoration of the Jewish state. " Those who returned at the first " were in Nehemiah's eyes " those who returned with Zerubbabel."

But not so simple as this was the interpretation given to the words " at the first " by a Jewish annalist of the third century B.C., who was seeking for materials for writing Jewish history from



the end of the Babylonian captivity onwards. This annalist had in his mind the famous fact that Cyrus was the king who first gave permission to the Jews to return from Babylon to Jerusalem, and under whom they actually did begin to return. The annalist, knowing this, endeavoured to find testimony which should amplify and adorn this bare statement. He possessed the first chapter of the book of Ezra ; but that chapter seemed to him, as undoubtedly it is, exceedingly meagre ; and he sought for more information. It never for a moment occurred to him to look into the book of Isaiah, or into the psalms, for evidence of what happened at such a period ; these two books, which would have given him much information, he absolutely ignored. But he did possess Nehemiah's personal narrative, and his catalogue ; and he read what Nehemiah had said, that this catalogue was the list of those who came up "at the first." Immediately our annalist jumped to the conclusion that these were those who returned under Cyrus ; and believing also (and in this point correctly) that by those who returned at the first Nehemiah had meant those who returned under Zerubbabel, our annalist made Zerubbabel return under Cyrus. His knowledge of Persian kings was meagre ; he knew nothing of Cambyses, nor (according to my view) of Darius son of Hystaspes ; and he saw nothing improbable in believing that Zerubbabel had returned under Cyrus and had finally built the temple under Darius Nothus. That is the statement of the book of Ezra as we have it, and the length of life which it implies in Zerubbabel is plainly impossible ; but our annalist did not know it to be impossible. Hence, very rashly, but not with absolute bad faith, he took Nehemiah's catalogue, prefixed an observation to it, and made it the continuation of the first chapter of Ezra, although not writing it on the same roll on which the first chapter of Ezra was written. The document which he wrote was an independent document, as we see from the fact that when it (or a copy of it) came into the hands of the two compilers who respectively wrote Ezra and 1 Esdras, these two compilers placed it differently, as was noted in an earlier part of this Appendix.

Now let us see how our annalist treated the catalogue which he was transcribing. I have said that he prefixed an observation to it ; this observation consisted of the words which we now find in Nehemiah vii. 6, 7, from "These are the children of the province" down to the name "Baanah" ; and it will be seen that our annalist, in a loose sort of way, put down Nehemiah

as returning with Zerubbabel and Jeshua. I know of course that the name "Nehemiah" was owned by more than one person, but it is probable from the position which the name occupies in the book of Nehemiah vii. 7, that the well-known Nehemiah is the one there meant. Thus our annalist transcribed his catalogue; but he was under some real difficulty as to where the catalogue ended<sup>1</sup>. The catalogue, together with the personal narrative of Nehemiah, was in the third century imbedded, as it is now, in the middle of the history of Ezra (which also is in part a personal narrative). So, being in doubt where to stop, our annalist found himself carried on past the true catalogue, until after transcribing the words "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man" he found that he was approaching the history of Ezra. Now he knew very well that it was not the history of Ezra that he wished to tell, but the history of Zerubbabel and Jeshua. However, it was not his way to scratch out what he had once written; what he had written was not palpably false; and it served him very well as an introduction to the history which he proceeded to give. So he went on to relate what, though he had no evidence for it, he thought must have happened; the erection of the altar of burnt offerings, the celebration of the feast of tabernacles (the mention of the "seventh month" in the passage which he had transcribed gave him the hint for this) and the laying of the foundation of the temple; and then the breach with the Samaritans which (he thought) prevented the temple from being completed. Thus, out of exceedingly slight materials, he made a highly respectable narrative.

Let the reader carefully consider this analysis of the passage under consideration (Ezra ii. iii. iv. 1-5 or 1 Esdras v. 7-73) and see whether it does not afford a full and natural explanation of the bungle which I noted at the beginning of this Appendix, and which I have continually referred to since—the bungle of transferring verses which originally applied to one period of history, for the purpose of describing another period of history. It is an essential part of the proof that the whole passage referred to was not originally in the position which it now occupies; this is shown by the fact that its present place in Ezra is different from its present place in 1 Esdras, and also by the

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to be sure whether the verses Nehemiah vii. 70-72 originally contained a mention of the temple as Ezra ii. 68, 69 does (in which case they belong to the true catalogue), or whether they are correct as they stand, and the mention of the temple in Ezra ii. 68, 69 an interpolation. I incline to the latter opinion.



fact that it is palpably not in agreement with the first chapter of Ezra, and is inconsistent with the whole tenor of its context. This fact compels us to consider how the whole passage came into being; and the expressions noted in 1 Esdras v. 40 and 47 prove that that chapter originally described what was happening in the time of Nehemiah (the catalogue belonging to a time thirty-eight years earlier) and had nothing at all to do with the reign of Cyrus. The transference of it to the reign of Cyrus was an illegitimate act of the historian (or the annalist, as I have called him); though, as I think I have shown, a natural act, and not, when the manner of writing history in those times is considered, an act very greatly to be censured. And of course Ezra ii. iii. iv. 1-5 being the same passage as 1 Esdras v. 7-73 (only in Hebrew instead of in Greek) falls along with it.

How can it be denied after this that the plain testimony of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (which originally constituted one book) is that the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel took place in the reign of Darius Nothus, or in other words from the year 422 B.C. to the year 418 B.C.? When the passage on which I have been commenting is eliminated, the testimony of these books is perfectly clear; and even more clear, if possible, is the testimony of the first book of Esdras, which distinctly says that Zerubbabel returned in the reign of *some* Darius, though afterwards in the interpolated passage it implies that Zerubbabel returned in the reign of Cyrus.

Why should not this simple piece of testimony be accepted? What is there to be said against it? Two expressions, one in the prophet Haggai, the other in the prophet Zechariah, may at first sight appear as a difficulty, but I think I have fully explained them in the chapter to which this Appendix belongs. Let me, however, now mention another objection on which great stress is laid. Zerubbabel is called the son of Shealtiel, who was the son of that king Jehoiachin who surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar in the year 598 B.C., and who after thirty-six or thirty-seven years of captivity was set free by the successor of Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach. That is to say, Jehoiachin was set free about the year 562 or 561 B.C., being then fifty-four or fifty-five years of age. It is not likely then that Shealtiel was born later than 550 B.C.; and though it is not quite impossible that he might have a son still alive and vigorous in 422 B.C., it is not likely. Still greater appears the difficulty in the case of the high priest Joshua or Jeshua, who is called the son of Jozadak (or

Jehozadak). For Jozadak was the son of that high priest Seraiah who was put to death by Nebuchadnezzar in the year 586 B.C. (2 Kings xxv. 18-21). It certainly is impossible that a son of Jozadak could be alive and active in the year 422 B.C. But those who urge these difficulties take no note of the fact that, while an even greater difficulty occurs in the case of Ezra, the explanation of it in the case of Ezra is fully sufficient to explain it in the cases of Zerubbabel and of Jeshua also. Ezra is called the son of that same Seraiah who was put to death by Nebuchadnezzar. (For the proof that it is *this* Seraiah of whom Ezra is called the son, compare 1 Chronicles vi. 4-14 with Ezra vii. 1-5). Now the earliest date at which the arrival of Ezra at Jerusalem can possibly be placed is 457 B.C., so that on this showing Ezra must have been at that time at least 129 years old! How are we to explain the apparent error? By the simple consideration, which is as applicable to the cases of Zerubbabel and Jeshua as to the case of Ezra, that the word "son" means "descendant." Moreover, we know quite well why the intermediate steps, between Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, between Jozadak and Jeshua, between Seraiah and Ezra, were omitted by those who referred to these personages. The Jews never willingly recognised any deed done during the time of the Babylonian captivity, or any person whose life lay during that time. It may perhaps seem that the prophet Ezekiel is an exception to this statement, but he is not a true exception; for the greater part of his prophecies were written before the captivity in its full extent began. Shealtiel indeed is a true exception; he owes his being named to the fact that his father was honoured by the king Evil-merodach. But the greatest proof that the Jews were determined to keep silence on all who lived in the time of the captivity lies in the fact that the great prophet who wrote the last twenty-seven chapters of the book of Isaiah was never recognised by them as an individual at all. That prophet does describe the first return from the captivity, but the phrases in which he describes it were ignored by the Jews of after times; they were willing enough to accept his exalted prophecies, but for his personality they had no regard, and the unhappy and partial kind of return which he describes in the later chapters of his prophecy, appeared derogatory to their self-esteem. Had he been able to describe a brilliant return, in which the Jews were honoured by the monarchs of the world, we should have known his name. But it was impossible that he could do any



such thing ; and hence the Jews, while aware of the exalted character of his writings, were oblivious of his personality. We cannot then be surprised that, in speaking of the ancestry of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and Ezra, they omitted all mention of their near ancestors, and went straight to the ancestor who connected these important persons with the great kings and priests who were of old.

What other objections are there to putting Zerubbabel under Darius Nothus, Ezra and Nehemiah under Artaxerxes Mnemon ? It is confidently said that the Aramaic papyri of Assuan give evidence of the earlier date ; that the Sinuballit of the papyri, who was governor of Samaria in the latter part of the fifth century B.C., must be the same as the Sanballat of the book of Nehemiah (who in this case must have lived in the fifth century B.C.) ; that the high priest Jehohanan of the papyri, whose date was 411 B.C., must be the same as the Johanan, who was grandson of the high priest Eliashib, and who is mentioned in Nehemiah xii. 22 as among the high priests ; from which it would follow that Eliashib lived in the fifth century B.C., and therefore that Ezra and Nehemiah, his contemporaries, lived in that century. But with respect to Sinuballit, those who use this argument forget that the Sinuballit of the papyri was friendly to the Jews, as is proved both by the fact that the Jews of Syene (or Assuan) addressed an appeal to him, and also by the fact that Delaja, the son of this Sinuballit, joined with Bagohi, the governor of Judæa, in answering this appeal, and moreover answering it in such a way as to save the religious feelings of the Jews of Jerusalem in the highest degree. Surely the Sinuballit of the Aramaic papyri was not the Sanballat of the book of Nehemiah ! But with respect to Jehohanan, I admit that this name, in itself, would be an argument for the earlier date ; for according to my view of the chronology, there is no known Jehohanan, or Johanan, to fill the place of high priest at the date indicated by the Assuan papyri, whereas there is such a Johanan according to the chronology which puts Ezra in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus. My view of the chronology requires that there shall have been a high priest Johanan, or Jehohanan, at about that place where the twelfth chapter of Nehemiah (verses 10 and 26) puts Joiakim. It is possible that a name may have slipped out of the list ; or it is possible that the priest Jehohanan (whom we know from Nehemiah xii. 13 to have lived in the days of Joiakim) may have temporarily discharged the functions of

high priest ; and it is even possible that in Ezra x. 6, where the present reading is "Jehohanan the son of Eliashib," there has been a wrong addition of these latter words, and that "Jehohanan" alone should be read ; in which case Jehohanan might naturally be understood to be the high priest at that time and for some years previously. I cannot say with certainty what precise answer is to be given to this objection to my view ; but I think the objection is practically upset by the observation which I will now proceed to make. In the twelfth chapter of Nehemiah, verses 10 and 11, the list of high priests is given in the following terms :

And Jeshua begat Joiakim, and Joiakim begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada, and Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua.

The last four of these high priests are mentioned again (Johanan taking the place of Jonathan) in verse 22, which I will quote :

The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded heads of fathers' houses : also the priests, in (or to) the reign of Darius the Persian. Nehemiah xii. 22.

Why "Darius the Persian," and not "Darius king of Persia," which is the phrase everywhere else (except where it is simply "Darius the king") ? I answer, because it was intended to contrast him with the Greek kings who came after the Persian kings ; under one of which Greek kings the compiler of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah lived. It was natural to use this expression, implying such a contrast as this, with respect to the last Persian king, Darius Codomannus ; it would not have been natural to apply it to Darius Nothus, who reigned in the middle of the series of Persian kings. The only other instances that I can find of a similar expression are in the book of Daniel, and in each of these a similar reason exists ; there is an intention of contrasting a king of one race with a king, directly sequent or precedent in time, of another race. Let me quote the passages ; the first is Daniel v. 30, 31 :

In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

I need not discuss the history of this passage ; all that I am concerned with now is the phrase "Darius the Mede," which evidently is introduced because a change in the nationality of the king was to be marked ; and the same is the case in the 30th verse of the same chapter, where another change in the nationality of the dynasty occurs :

So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.



Exactly in a similar way "Darius the Persian" is used in Nehemiah xii. 22, because the writer has in his mind the change in the nationality of the dynasty which ensued after the reign of this king Darius, who therefore must be Darius Codomannus, whose reign lasted from 336 B.C. to 331 B.C., after which date Alexander of Macedon obtained sovereignty over the Persian empire.

Now in view of this meaning of "Darius the Persian" in Nehemiah xii. 22 (quoted above), it becomes clear that Jaddua, the last of the high priests mentioned in this verse, lived in the reign of Darius Codomannus, which is exactly what Josephus tells us; and this makes it plain also that the Johanan who was the high priest immediately preceding Jaddua, and who was the grandson of Eliashib, was not the Jehohanan who was high priest in 411 B.C. of whom the papyri of Assuan tell us. The last objection then to putting the high priests Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan in the fourth century before Christ, rather than in the fifth century, is thus removed; and the whole chronology for which I have been contending is vindicated.

To conclude. Let the reader consider how in the chapter to which this Appendix belongs, and in this Appendix itself, I have placed various Biblical books, two important chapters in the Antiquities of Josephus, and the Aramaic papyri of Assuan, in an order which makes them eloquent of the history of the Jewish nation; that I have presented more than two centuries of that history, from 538 B.C. to 320 B.C., in clear light, whereas those who maintain that Zerubbabel returned in the reign of Cyrus wander in unintelligible labyrinths of darkness, and cannot say anything at all of what happened to the Jews in the fourth century before Christ (for they have to give up Josephus as wholly untrustworthy). Can there be any doubt that the history as I have narrated it is the true history? The Biblical books that I have placed in proper order, and interpreted in clear and natural historical sequence, are these: First, the last twenty-seven chapters of the book which is called the book of Isaiah, which show the faithful Jews, animated by the extraordinary fervour and grandeur of conception shown by this great prophet, beginning to reestablish themselves in Jerusalem, under extraordinary difficulties; for the surrounding nations looked upon them with disfavour, they were few in number, and many of the Jews themselves looked upon this enterprise of a return to Jerusalem as quixotic and impossible. Moreover, some of the Jews were

still prone to idolatry. The only historical passage of the Bible which relates to this particular time is the first chapter of Ezra, which is quite credible but very scanty in its information; it is to be noted that it does not say that Cyrus gave the Jews material help; and such help as was given the returning exiles was given them by their own fellow-countrymen who were not yet prepared to return. This indeed is not expressly said, but must be understood to be the meaning of verses 4 and 6 of this chapter. After this, to understand the difficulties which the Jews underwent in their partially recovered country, we have to take the book of Psalms, all the early part of which book (with some exceptions) is full of suffering and conflict, though we perceive that the Jews had rebuilt their temple; but the temple so rebuilt was destroyed, as we see from Psalms lxxiv. and lxxix. It is natural to connect this event with the troubles which are faintly referred to in one verse of the book of Ezra (iv. 6) and of which the book of Esther professes to be the account, though that book represents the final triumph of the Jews as far more signal and complete than we can suppose it to have been. However, the Jews did survive; and this event took place in the reign of Ahasuerus (or Xerxes), that is at some date between 485 B.C. and 465 B.C. After this, Ezra iv. 7-24 carries us through the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus; after which a greater collection of authorities awaits us. Not only have we the book of Ezra, chapters v. and vi. (and the parallel passages in the first book of Esdras have to be referred to), but we have also the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and a large number of the psalms, beginning with the 84th and 85th and then most of those in the series from the 90th to the 138th inclusive; all these books refer largely to the temple which Zerubbabel built with full permission of the Persian king Darius Nothus. Moreover, the Aramaic papyri of Assuan give us further evidence of the interest which this king took in the Jews (as I have stated on page 353 above), a fact which falls in with the general course of the evidence here given, that Darius Nothus was the king under whom Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple. After this come the curious facts made known to us by the main body of the Assuan papyri, from which it is clear that the Samaritans were not at this time, i.e. in the year 407 B.C., on the whole, hostile to the Jews. But the eleventh chapter of the prophet Zechariah shows us trouble impending, and the good feeling which was beginning to exist between the Jews and the surrounding



nations (and especially the Samaritans) suddenly endangered by the narrow party among the Jews. This narrowing tendency was brought to a head by Ezra ; and now from 397 B.C. to nearly the middle of the fourth century we have as our authorities the book of Ezra from the seventh chapter onwards, and also the book of Nehemiah. The twelfth chapter of the book of Nehemiah does indeed, in its mention of the high priests Johanan and Jaddua, carry us past the middle of the fourth century ; but on the whole our authority for the latter part of the fourth century lies in the eleventh book of the Antiquities of Josephus, in the last two chapters of that book.

Such are our authorities, stated in order, for the period from 538 B.C. to 320 B.C. ; and then for the third century we have to depend historically on Josephus ; but the third century was a great literary period apart from its detailed history.

I hope that my elucidation of these historical events, and of the literary works which illustrate them, has not been tedious. But in any case, the conclusion which I have reached is one in which every man ought to take an interest. That conclusion is, the vindication of the honour of the bravest and most enlightened people of all antiquity, namely the Jews. Never, up to the present day, have the ancient Jews received their proper honour. It is true that they were excelled in some respects by Greeks and Romans, perhaps by some other ancient nations ; but no other people penetrated as they did into the very heart of divine things. It is true, also, that they became narrow ; but the difficulty of preserving their unity, and the unity of their faith, without becoming narrow, was very great ; we cannot help marking their fault, but they well deserve that we should pardon it.

## APPENDIX II TO CHAPTER XIV

### CONCERNING THE TITLES TO THE PSALMS

What is the value of the titles prefixed to the psalms in our Bible ; what inferences can be drawn from them ; at what date were they prefixed ; and why is it that 116 of the psalms have titles, while the remaining 34 have not got them ? To take the last question first : the omission of titles is in a few cases accidental, but generally the psalms without a title would

be psalms admitted into the volume (or let me say into one of the five books of which the psalter is composed) later than the rest. The psalms without a title are, however, not necessarily of later composition than those which stand by their side in the psalter ; in a few cases they are really later, but not generally.

But now as to the more important question, how the titles came into existence at all. We observe that they are frequently mixed up with instructions as to the singing of the choir, the tune or instruments to be adopted ; and this leads to the inference that the time when they were prefixed was the time when the temple services were first systematically arranged after the return from the captivity, or later than the time of Ezra. This inference will be confirmed if we attend to those psalms to which is prefixed the title "A psalm of Asaph." There are twelve of these : the 50th, and the series from the 73rd to the 83rd inclusive. Who was Asaph ? He was, according to the first book of Chronicles (xvi. 7), David's chief choirmaster. Now it is perfectly impossible that David's chief choirmaster can have composed Psalms lxxiv. lxxix. or lxxx. ; or, I may add, Psalms lxxviii. or lxxxiii. How then comes it that they were attributed to Asaph ? For a very obvious, though a very bad, reason ; because it was thought that, next to David himself, no one was so likely to compose psalms as those who had been appointed by David to minister in the temple, and especially those who superintended the music of the temple. Hence certain psalms were attributed to Asaph ; a good many also to the sons of Korah, also known from the Chronicles. But the books of Samuel and Kings, as they know nothing of Asaph, so also they know nothing of the sons of Korah. It is plain then that these titles, which in some cases are impossible beyond doubt, were prefixed blindly and by virtue of a late and untrustworthy tradition ; and hence the titles generally have no authority. At the same time, this consideration proves that few psalms, and none of those that have titles, can have been composed in the time of the Maccabees ; for the temple services were certainly arranged long before this time.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE HEAVENLY IDEAL TAKES TO ITSELF EARTHLY ARMOUR

BEFORE coming to the detailed history which must occupy the present chapter, an important question has to be asked, the answer to which will greatly influence our thoughts as to the whole subject of which the present work is the exposition. Was there any intrinsic danger, discernible in the history of Israel, leading to that moral error which marred the noble qualities of the Jewish nation—their narrowness and resolute, deliberate separation from the nations round them? There was a plain danger in their exceedingly literal obedience to the religion which they had received; in their refusal to exercise their own judgment as to the intrinsic merits of the beliefs which they held, of the commands which they obeyed. Only in one respect do we read of their using a personal judgment in modification of a commandment esteemed by them as divine; and that was, that in war time they determined that it was lawful to fight on the sabbath. At first they had held otherwise; but their sufferings in consequence were so palpable and so great that they changed their opinion and their action. The very interesting record of this change of purpose will be found in 1 Maccabees ii. 29–41. In other respects, the Jews seem to have held literalness of obedience obligatory, no matter what the circumstances might be; and in the manner in which they interpreted their law, this literalness of obedience involved an extreme degree of separation from neighbouring nations—far more than had characterised them in the times precedent to the severe reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah.

It is impossible not to trace a connexion between this rigidity of practice, and the belief which the Jewish nation held as to the literal truth of those miracles which, in the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, are related as preceding and accompanying the giving of the divine law to Israel. Throughout the

whole story of the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage, as that is told in the Biblical books just mentioned, the action and the commands of Jehovah are represented as equally clear and unmistakable with any commands which an earthly general might issue to his followers, or any action which an earthly king might direct against enemies or rebels. If there is mystery in the Divine Nature when regarded in itself, if there is uncertainty in the human interpretation of the Divine Will, at all events this mystery, this uncertainty, does not attach to the revelation as it is recorded in Exodus and Deuteronomy ; and the penalties threatened in case of disobedience are especially clear and terrible. Can we wonder that religious Jews, believing in the entire truth of the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, should have resigned their own judgment in following commands which to their apprehension were so clearly sanctioned, and in themselves so unmistakable ? Can we wonder that they should have resolved rather to go beyond than to fall short of the obedience which seemed to be required of them ? Yet is it not plain that this resignation of their own natural judgment landed them in those very faults which we discern so plainly in their conduct ? The prophets would have guarded them against such faults ; but the prophets could produce no miracles in favour of a broad and liberal temperament equal to those which the law appeared to record as inculcating narrowness ; and therefore narrowness triumphed. But can it be denied that this consideration must influence us against the literal truth of the miracles of Exodus and of Mount Sinai ? “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

I return to the historical sequence, towards the end of the third century before Christ.

The Jews suffered considerably during those wars between the kings of Syria and the kings of Egypt which took place at this period ; and some of them became weary of their isolation and severance from other nations. Practically they had been transferred to the Syrian kingdom, though it had been arranged by treaty that they should be replaced under the dominion of Egypt ; but Antiochus IV, who mounted the Syrian throne in the year 175 B.C., was not a man to give up easily what he practically possessed. About this time some of the Jews of Jerusalem established a Greek gymnasium in their city ; a place of exercise, where Jews, following the Greek example, might run races, or throw the quoit, or wrestle, entirely naked. Such



a custom gave great offence to the religious Jews ; but worse things were at hand.

In the year 171 B.C., Ptolemy Philometor, the youthful king of Egypt, determined to vindicate his treaty rights over Palestine, and sent an army there ; but Antiochus, of the two, had the greater military skill. (He was called Epiphanes—the “ Illustrious ”—by his flatterers ; and the title, without any special reference to its meaning, has stuck to him ; Antiochus Epiphanes he is called.) He won the victory, and was at first disposed to treat the Egyptian monarch not unfairly ; but in the year 168 B.C., under circumstances of some provocation, he showed a disposition to effect the entire conquest of Egypt. Then the great power of Rome, always favourable to the Ptolemies, intervened in their favour. The deputy Popilius met Antiochus Epiphanes near Pelusium, on the confines of Egypt ; and after some parleying, brought the question at issue to a point by an act which the historian Polybius tells us was thought overbearing (and we may think so too). With the stick that he held he drew a circle in the sand round the monarch, and demanded that Antiochus, before he stepped outside that circle, should give a plain answer to the question, whether he did or did not intend to conquer Egypt ? Such an intention, it was clearly implied, would be equivalent to making war with Rome. Antiochus knew the power of Rome ; for not only did he remember how the Romans had defeated his father Antiochus III, but he himself had lived at Rome, as a hostage, for years ; and he submitted. Egypt was saved ; but it was at the expense of Jerusalem.

Already, two years earlier than the date at which I have now arrived, Antiochus Epiphanes had visited Jerusalem, and had plundered it of all the gold that was in the temple and in the sanctuary, as the first book of Maccabees tells us. Now, wounded to the quick by the contumely with which the Romans had treated him, he resolved to prove himself the master at any rate of his own dominions ; and he issued a decree commanding uniformity of religious worship in the lands which he ruled. Such a decree has had parallels both in ancient and in modern times ; king Josiah, for instance, had made a similar attempt in his own small kingdom of Judah. Josiah was a far more religious man than Antiochus Epiphanes, and he ruled over a people naturally more united in religious belief than the miscellaneous Syrian population ; yet even he failed to produce permanent uniformity in religion, as we see by what happened in the

reigns of the succeeding kings of Judah. It could not be expected that Antiochus Epiphanes should succeed ; but the extent and suddenness of his failure could hardly have been anticipated.

He sent a collector of tribute with an armed force to Jerusalem, who occupied the city at first peaceably ; but who presently revealed his true character as a bloody persecutor. Large parts of Jerusalem were burned down, men were killed, women and children were enslaved ; a great fortress was constructed, and was garrisoned with soldiers taken from that part of the Jewish population which had consented to adopt Hellenic customs both in ordinary life and in religious worship ; heathen worship was established in the temple ; the possession of a copy of the Pentateuchal law was made a criminal offence, punishable with death. Commands were issued that through all Judæa altars to heathen deities should be erected.

Such is the account given in the first book of Maccabees. The second book of Maccabees renders the situation more comprehensible, and (it must be added) slightly more favourable to Antiochus Epiphanes himself, by telling us of the disorders that had taken place within Jerusalem owing to the action of those Jews who desired to embrace Hellenic customs ; disorders which had been so represented to Antiochus, as to make him think the whole nation in revolt. Revolt, however, there had so far been none ; though the internal strife within Jerusalem, between the Jews themselves, had been lamentable. The one bright spot in the history, before the rising of the Maccabees, had been the conduct of the brave and faithful high priest Onias, who had been deposed through the machinations of an unworthy competitor, and who was afterwards slain at Antioch for his protest against the ill-dealings of another false high priest (not the one by whom he himself had been driven out). The second book of Maccabees also tells us that the Samaritans were being persecuted, and speaks of the temple on Mount Gerizim without enmity, which is notable ; nor does the second book of Maccabees charge the Samaritans with recreancy, as Josephus does. We may believe that there were recreant Samaritans, but we may also believe that there were faithful Samaritans. However, no doubt the Jews were the braver people.

For the moment, Jerusalem was Hellenised ; but resistance to Antiochus broke out in the small town of Modin, in the north of Judæa. In this city Mattathias was a man high in esteem, and also a priest ; and the officers of king Antiochus were



exceedingly anxious that he should set the example to his fellow-citizens of obedience to the king's commands. They summoned him therefore and other elders of the city to a conference, and the altar on which the heathen sacrifice (probably to Zeus Hellenios) was to be performed stood close at hand. He was invited to offer sacrifice (by burning incense, we must suppose); he replied that, though all the nations in the realms of king Antiochus were to forsake the worship of their fathers and to do what the king bade them do, he and his sons and his brethren would follow the law which they had received from their fathers, and would not obey the king. Scarcely had he spoken when another Jew came forward and offered the heathen sacrifice prescribed. Trembling with indignation, Mattathias rushed forward, and killed the sacrificing Jew upon the altar; and in this, it must be observed, he was following the strict command of the book of Deuteronomy (xiii. 6-9). But such an act was a declaration of war; and having done it, Mattathias turned on the chief officer of the king, and slew him also. Then, we read, he

cried out in the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous for the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him come after me. And he and his sons fled into the mountains, and forsook all that they had in the city.

In such a way did the great and patriotic Maccabean war begin; and surely, if we are to sympathise with any warriors, we must sympathise with Mattathias and his sons. It is true, that there is a spiritual war, which is greater than any war waged with material weapons; a war in which the sufferer for truth does not seek to inflict injury on those who oppress him; a war in which the flame of love, nourished invisibly, consumes the evil passions that oppose themselves to it. It must be conceded that Mattathias had not framed, even in his imagination, the thought of a spiritual war of this kind. But even if it had been in his thoughts, was the time ripe for so pure an agency of the spirit? I think not; and if this opinion be correct, we must give to the act of Mattathias our full approval. I do not indeed know that that approval has ever been withheld from him, either by Christians, or by lovers of liberty in any age; but it is well to make it clear that, though a higher form of action than his was under certain conditions conceivable and possible, those conditions did not exist for him, and he was bound to act as he did.

Of all wars of liberation, hardly any is so wonderful as that which ensued after this beginning. Mattathias soon died, overcome by age and hardships ; but he left five sons behind him, every one of whom was inspired by the ardent resolve either to set their nation free or to die. Of these five sons, Judas, surnamed Maccabæus, has won by far the greatest fame, and justly ; for he (the third in order of age) was the first after his father's death to take command of the whole band of insurgents, and he broke the forces of the king of Syria when they were strongest and most united. No greater proof has ever been given of the warlike strength which religion is capable of inspiring ; for Judas did not fear to attack an army exceeding his own numbers tenfold ; and at last, in a lull of which his victories had been the cause, he went up to Jerusalem, purified the temple, and restored the ceremonies and sacrifices ordained by the Pentateuchal law. This was three years after its desecration by the order of Antiochus Epiphanes ; but the real end of the war was yet far distant. There were still many Jews who adhered to the cause of the oppressor, and who desired to adopt Greek customs, perhaps even the Greek religion ; and these actually held the citadel at Jerusalem, from which Judas and his followers, though masters of the city, were unable to dislodge them. Yet the victories of Judas were sufficient to strike dismay into the heart of king Antiochus ; and that imperious monarch died (or according to some accounts was slain) in the year following the restoration of the temple to those divine uses for which it was lawfully intended.

I must not follow this Maccabean war in its details. The first of the five illustrious brethren to die was Eleazar, who with his sword slew the elephant on which he believed the Syrian king to be sitting (this Syrian king was the successor of Antiochus Epiphanes) ; the elephant, pierced by the deadly blow from beneath, fell on Eleazar and crushed him. Next came the turn of Judas himself, who with eight hundred men attacked an army of twenty-two thousand ; he fell, the greatest warrior that the race of Israel had produced since the days of David ; perhaps a greater warrior even than David. He was succeeded in the leadership by Jonathan, the youngest of the five ; the eldest of the brothers, John, was shortly after this captured and slain. After this there was a lull in the fighting ; the Jewish patriots, outworn by their efforts, were no longer able to gain signal victories ; on the other hand, the keen desire to destroy the



Jewish religion had received a check by the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the temple service at Jerusalem went on unhindered. The principal enemies of the ministrations at the temple were now the recreant Jews, who still held the citadel at Jerusalem ; for they knew that they could not safely surrender themselves to their fellow-countrymen, and it was necessary for them therefore to hold by the royal government, and even to accentuate its disposition against the Jewish patriots. However, the kingdom of Syria was in a state of internal dissension ; and Jonathan was powerful enough for his alliance to be sought eagerly by the contending parties. Hence the Hellenising Jews, though desirous of obtaining the help of the various Greek governments, never succeeded in doing so, and became weaker continually. In the end, Jonathan was treacherously slain ; but the last of the five brothers, Simon, was not wanting to the needs of his people. He, the second of the five in age, had been designated by his father as the most prudent counsellor among them ; and he was eminently fitted to complete the work which his brother Judas had begun. In his days, we read in the first book of Maccabees (xiii. 41), "the yoke of the heathen was taken away from Israel" ; the Jews became free, and as in the ancient times, owed allegiance to none but God. The Greek power had fallen by its own inherent weakness ; and the favour of the Romans, which Judas Maccabæus and his successors had won, contributed to this happy conclusion.

Simon, as high priest, directed the affairs of his fellow-countrymen splendidly and honourably ; religious dissension had ceased, not without the use of force, it is true ; but henceforth we hear no more of the heathenising tendency which had so largely contributed to encourage the tyrannous designs of Antiochus Epiphanes. Never again would the Jews embrace the Greek religion or Greek customs. What precisely happened to the recreant Jews, when they were compelled to submit to their fellow-countrymen, we are not told ; but they were not slain (1 Maccabees xiii. 43-53).

In the end Simon was killed by a wicked son-in-law, who hoped to obtain the government for himself ; but his son John was warned in time, not indeed to save his father, but to prevent the murderer reaping the benefit of his deed. John Hyrcanus he was called ; and a very powerful prince he proved himself to be. Though at first hard pressed by Antiochus Sidetes, king of Syria, and compelled to pay tribute to him, he presently

took advantage of the Syrian dissensions to obtain entire freedom. We cannot entirely approve of his subsequent measures. He conquered Samaria and Idumæa ; razed to the ground the city of Samaria, and the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, and compelled all the Idumæans to accept the rite of circumcision, which that nation thenceforth faithfully practised, becoming thereby practically one nation with the Jews. There was no need to enforce circumcision on the Samaritans, for they already practised that rite ; but the Samaritans, when they regained some power, vindicated their separateness from the Jews, and refused a friendship which they could not sincerely feel. While it is true that John Hyrcanus carried the Jewish power to a height greater than it had reached since the days of Solomon, we must regard him as reverting to an earthly ideal as the goal of his fellow-countrymen, and as forgetting that moderation and tenderness which in the prophets had been a light pointing to a heavenly ideal and to a new order of creative power.

Yet, among the faithful spirits in Israel, the thought of the heavenly ideal had not been lost. It was held, indeed, with some confusion of thought, as was natural where so many different and warring impulses were in the field ; but it claimed for itself a true place, in what manner I must now show.

The glory of the Maccabean period comes to an end with the death of John Hyrcanus, about the end of the second century before Christ. From the very beginning of the struggle against the Syrian kings, the darkness of the post-captivity period is dispelled ; a clearer light rests on the affairs of the Jewish nation than, perhaps, at any previous period of their history ; certainly than on any period since the reign of David. The great men who set the Jewish nation free and saved their religion from extermination, the family of which Judas Maccabæus is the most famous figure, are worthy of being set beside any of the great men of action who had illustrated the earlier Israelite history—by the side of Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David. Tolerance was not their virtue (and their predecessors had set them no example of tolerance) ; to us they may seem cruel, but not wantonly cruel ; their enemies were so strong that the exercise of mercy towards them would entail dangers beyond the ordinary. Two things distinguish the religion of the Maccabean era from the religion of ancient days ; one, the constancy with which the ceremonial law was now kept, especially as regards the sabbath and the sabbatical year (the history is full of instances



of this); the other, the absence of recognised prophecy. The consciousness of Judas Maccabæus and his fellows that the prophetic power was not theirs was curiously shown when they had to consider what to do with the altar in the temple which had been desecrated by heathen sacrifices; they dared not offer sacrifices upon it any longer, but neither dared they offer it any reproach; so they laid up the stones of it "in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to give an answer concerning them." It never occurred to these brave and faithful Jews that the reason why there was no prophet among them was that they had elevated the *book*, and especially the book of the ceremonial law, into too high a place. The history of the Divine dealings with Israel, the practice of those ordinances which symbolised to Israel the Divine Presence, were so much to the Jewish nation at that date, that they had lost the direct touch with God, the direct inspiration of God.

Yet, after all, they had not lost it entirely. At that very hour, when the Jews looked upon prophecy as a thing of the past, prophecy was near at hand again. Not the direct and simple prophecy that there had been of old; no man in the time of the Maccabees dared to speak to his fellows plainly in the name of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel; but the prophetic instinct was there, and it found a way for itself. The great courage of the Maccabees had stirred the hearts of all Jews, far or near; they asked, what was to come of it? And the answer was, The Kingdom of God. Surely, if men were faithful to God (and the Jews felt that some among them had been faithful) God would bend down from heaven and raise up his faithful servants to share in his kingdom!

That is the conviction of which the book of Daniel is the exponent. It is a conviction also which breathes lyrically in the 149th psalm, which I cannot but think Maccabean; but in the book of Daniel it forms part of a carefully thought out view of history, which has arrested the attention of many generations. I am assuming, it will be seen, that the book of Daniel was written, in the main, after the Maccabean wars; and this implies that there is a great deal in it which pretends to be prophecy and to have been written in ancient times, which really was past history at the time when the book was written; and it may be thought that a pretence of this kind debars the writer from any claim to be a true prophet. That, however, would by no means be a just judgment. The Jews of the period

after the captivity lived in an ideal world, and fiction came very naturally to them; the more naturally, in proportion as it ministered to their ideal. No one can reasonably doubt that the book of Judith is simple fiction, and the book of Tobit also, and the history of Susanna, and of Bel and the Dragon; nor can I much doubt that the famous story which occupies the third and fourth chapters of the 1st book of Esdras is fiction also. Surely too the story of Job is a fable, and not real history; and (as I said in the preceding chapter) the details, though not altogether the substance, of the book of Esther also. Not one of these books was written with any bad conscience, or with any thought in the writer's mind that he was deceiving his readers; the careful sifting of statements into historical and unhistorical had not yet begun among the Jews. When real interesting facts had to be told, a Jewish historian could tell them, as we see in the first book of Maccabees; but the temperament of the Jews was none the less deeply imaginative, and their imagination mingled with their historical knowledge in a way often remarkable as parable or as philosophy, even where they strayed most widely from literal accuracy of fact.

The book of Daniel is an instance illustrative of these remarks. In the narrative portion of it (as distinguished from the prophecies which it contains) we find the names of real historical characters—Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Ahasuerus (or Xerxes), Cyrus. But Belshazzar was not the last monarch of the dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar, nor indeed was he of the dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar at all, nor was he the monarch under whom the glory of empire passed away from Babylon. Darius was not a Mede, nor did he precede Cyrus, nor was he the son of Ahasuerus (i.e. Xerxes) but his father. These serious historical errors had long been more or less suspected, and have been made absolutely clear since the cuneiform inscriptions have been interpreted. (See Professor Sayce's work, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, ch. XI.)

It will not be necessary to say more in this place of the narratives contained in the book of Daniel; but the prophecies in it must not be left without careful examination. It is desirable to make it clear, in the first instance, that in so far as these prophecies relate to definite history, they bring before us events which happened as far as the downfall of Antiochus Epiphanes, but not any event later than that occurrence.

There are five prophetic visions in the book of Daniel.



The first of them, which is related in the second chapter, is represented as a dream dreamed by king Nebuchadnezzar himself, but by him forgotten ; and the demand which he makes of his wise men is that they shall first recall the dream to his mind and then interpret it. The wise men fail ; but the youthful Jewish captive Daniel succeeds. What the king had dreamed was this : he had seen a great image, whose

head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

Upon this image fell a great stone and swept the image away ; and the stone became a mountain and filled the whole earth. To the dream the explanation is added. The four principal parts of the image are declared to be four great kingdoms, of which the first (the " head of gold ") is the kingdom set up by Nebuchadnezzar himself, the others are to follow in due sequence. But the stone is a heavenly kingdom which shall bring all these earthly kingdoms to nought, and shall last for ever.

It has always been felt by everyone who looks on the course of history with natural eyes, that these four kingdoms are the successive empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. But it has not generally been recognised that the empire of Rome, as described in this vision, is something very different from the empire of Rome as wielded by Augustus or by Tiberius. Here is the detailed description of it :

The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron : forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things : and as iron that crusheth all these, shall it break in pieces and crush. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay and part of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom ; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with pottery. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of pottery, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with pottery, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men ; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron doth not mingle with pottery. Daniel ii. 40-43.

That is not a description of the Roman empire in its perfected form ; but it is a description of it as it would present itself to the eyes of a Jew living about the year 170 B.C. Rome was then the centre of the world's power, and Rome was strong as iron. But the fragments of the Greek empire of Alexander, though submissive to Rome, were yet separate from Rome ; it was a " divided " kingdom. Nor can it be denied that Egypt, Syria,

and Greece were "brittle" in the days of which I am speaking; they were truly, in their relation to Rome, as pottery to iron.

But Antiochus Epiphanes is not mentioned in this first vision, which possibly was written before he became so distinctly the enemy of the Jews as he was afterwards. In the second vision, which occupies the seventh chapter, reference is made to him. Here again the basis of the vision lies in the four great kingdoms; they are figured here as four beasts; and it is plain that the prophet is much more impressed with the terribleness and fierceness of the fourth kingdom than he had been at the time of the first vision. Here are his words:

After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, terrible and powerful, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. *Daniel vii. 7, 8.*

Presently, in the explanation of the vision, we are told that the ten horns are ten kings, who shall arise out of the fourth kingdom; and the "little horn" is another king, who shall put down three kings. Whether we can identify all the ten kings, subordinate to the Roman republic, who are intended in this passage, is not of great importance; but in identifying the "little horn" with Antiochus Epiphanes, we have to remember first, that he was not unsuccessful as a warrior; and next, what better description of Antiochus Epiphanes could be given than the following words:

He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High: and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. *Ibid. vii. 25, 26.*

That is the real conclusion of the vision in the seventh chapter, as far as the four kingdoms are concerned. The fourth kingdom is no longer, as in the second chapter, surveyed calmly and from a distance; it is looked on as a real and fierce opponent; and the reason why it is so looked on lies in the "little horn." Rome has to answer for the sins of Antiochus Epiphanes; the two



are regarded as belonging to one order, and as amenable to the same judgment. That is the plain sense of the passage; and if it is not absolutely just, we must not look for abstract justice from a writer who had just seen all which he held most dear and sacred at the point of destruction through the powers of the world as they then were. In the seventh chapter, as in the second, the scene ends with the victory of the saints, with the establishment of the kingdom of God. Memorable, in view of their effect on subsequent history, were the following words, which occur at the end of the vision itself (the conception is slightly modified in the subsequent explanation):

I saw in the night visions, and behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. *Ibid.* vii. 13, 14.

There, indeed, we have prophecy, and not history! History and prophecy are fused together in the mind of the writer, and we may truly account him a prophet, because he valued the history only as ministrant to true and genuine prophecy. How greatly the conceptions and the actions of Jesus Christ were influenced by the passage that I have just quoted, no student of the Gospels can be ignorant.

Nevertheless, though the spirit of the book of Daniel, the ideal end foreseen in it, is genuine prophecy, the historical details in it which wear a prophetic guise are not genuine prophecy, but are history known to the writer. The main proof of this lies in the fact that the detailed prophecy (or what appears like prophecy) reaches as far as Antiochus Epiphanes, and no further. In the first vision indeed that monarch is absent, though the confused state of the world when he began to reign is vividly depicted; but in all the other visions Antiochus Epiphanes himself occurs, and is the closing figure (as far as the kingdoms of this world are concerned). Few can doubt this as regards the vision of the seventh chapter; and as regards the vision of the eighth chapter, it is both clear in itself, and I believe undoubted. In both the seventh and eighth chapters the prophetic vision leads up to the disclosure of a "little horn," which "made war against the saints, and prevailed against them" (chapter vii.); which "shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people," to use the tantamount words of the eighth chapter: and that which

absolutely fixes the little horn of the eighth chapter as Antiochus Epiphanes is the fact that he is distinctly represented as coming out of one of the four Greek kingdoms ; and also his taking away of the daily sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem is mentioned (viii. 11-14). In both the seventh and eighth chapters the " little horn " is destroyed (" broken without hand " is the phrase in the eighth chapter) ; and it is hardly possible not to identify these two destructive operations ; hence the two foes upon whom they are carried out must be the same individual.

Certain differences between the two earlier visions and the three later visions in the book of Daniel may now be mentioned. The chapters in which the two earlier visions are contained (those in the second and seventh chapters) are in the Aramaic language ; the chapters in which the three later visions are contained (those in the eighth, ninth, and eleventh chapters) are in Hebrew. Yet, if we were on this ground to suspect a difference of authorship, the similarity of style would take away the suspicion ; and no doubt Hebrew and Aramaic were equally familiar to the writer. Still, a certain interval is suggested, and is probable, between the two earlier and the three later visions, as to date of composition ; and we notice that whereas in the two earlier visions four world-empires are brought on the scene, in the three later visions only two of these empires enter in ; and a careful examination shows that in each case these two empires are the Persian empire and the Greek empire. This is obvious in the vision of the eighth chapter, and is disputed by nobody ; nor does any one deny that the vision of the eighth chapter ends with Antiochus Epiphanes. No one ought to doubt the same with regard to the vision of the eleventh chapter ; the Persian empire is mentioned in the second verse, Alexander of Macedon and his successors in the third and following verses, and Antiochus Epiphanes enters in at the 21st verse. His career is very much enlarged upon, and there appears to be some repetition, and perhaps a few inaccuracies. But it is plainly Antiochus Epiphanes who is meant all through. Nor is the case different with the vision in the ninth chapter ; though it is true that the traditional interpretation of this passage is one that makes it appear to prophesy the death of Jesus Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem by the arms of the Roman emperor Titus. So, for instance, Tertullian explains it (*adversus Judæos*, c. viii.) ; and our Authorised Version, by one very curious and acknowledged mistranslation, and by other translations



which are technically possible but really wrong<sup>1</sup>, supports this ancient interpretation. But it is an interpretation that will not stand; and our Revised Version has done much to correct the error. Antiochus Epiphanes it is who closes this prophecy, just as he closes the prophecy in the visions of the seventh, eighth, and eleventh chapters. The words which make this clear are the following:

And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and for the half of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the consummation, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolator. Daniel ix. 27.

These are the concluding words of the prophecy; and the "covenant" referred to is the covenant of Antiochus Epiphanes with the recreant Jews who kept the citadel at Jerusalem (the reckoning of a week, i.e. seven years, may be up to the death of Antiochus); the "half of the week" consists of the three years during which sacrifices according to the Jewish law were abolished in the temple; the words "upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate" remind us of the "abomination of desolation" in 1 Maccabees i. 54, which means the offering of heathen sacrifice upon the altar in the temple; and the "wrath poured out upon the desolator" refers to the defeat and death of Antiochus in the east. Thus, as far as worldly events are concerned, Antiochus Epiphanes closes the prophecy in the ninth chapter of Daniel, as he does the prophecies in the seventh, eighth, and eleventh chapters. But the true prediction of the book of Daniel, the prediction which gives the book its value, is the prophecy of the fifth kingdom, the kingdom of God; and this extends of course into illimitable time.

It may be safely assumed that if the prophecies of actual human history in the book of Daniel end with Antiochus Epiphanes (who, in his relation to the whole of history, was but an

<sup>1</sup> The acknowledged mistranslation lies in the words, "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself"; words which bring the Christian doctrine of the atonement straight to the front. The right translation is, "Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing"; except that the very word "Messiah" suggests implications beyond the real meaning. "The anointed one" would naturally mean the high priest; but possibly the real meaning is, as the Septuagint would suggest, "the anointing"; that is, the divine guidance of which the anointing is the symbol. Then, it is hardly to be doubted that "the anointed one" is to appear after *seven* weeks; not after sixty-nine weeks, as the Authorised Version says. Again "to anoint the most Holy" (Authorised Version) suggests the anointing of a person; whereas the Hebrew means "to anoint holy of holies"; and "holy of holies" (as Dr Driver has remarked) is the phrase which in Exodus is used to indicate the altar of burnt offering; which no doubt is meant here. Finally, the last word of the chapter, "desolate" in the Authorised Version, ought no doubt to be, as in the Revised Version, "desolator."

insignificant character), this is because history was known to the writer just as far as the era of Antiochus Epiphanes ; or in other words there is no true prophecy here. We should censure severely a writer of the present day who followed such a practice ; but in a Jew of the second century before Christ, with his strong capacity for visions, it ought not greatly to scandalise us. Moreover, the writer has something to say which will really instruct us, even in the parts where we may most criticise him. There is a truth and a comprehensiveness in his survey of history, and in his vision of the future, which remains valid, whatever be the weaknesses in his method of imparting his knowledge, and however much his forecast of the future may need modification in the light of later knowledge.

Who can forget his delineation of the four great world-empires, which one after another sought to dominate mankind ? How seldom has the kernel of history been disclosed with such conciseness and intelligibility ; and though he does not do justice to the inner worth of these powers, and especially not to Greece and Rome, he is right in regarding them, in their actual form, as earthly and not heavenly ; he is right in contrasting them with that pure and heavenly state which God will create and which will never pass away. I have already quoted part of the grand description of this in the seventh chapter. The last of the five visions is, as far as the eleventh chapter goes, prosaic ; but it is continued into the twelfth chapter, where the description of the kingdom of God, though not under that name, is resumed, and in memorable sentences :

Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. And thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end : many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. Daniel xii. 2-4.

If that is not quite the final word either as regards the prospects of mankind in this visible scene, or as regards the future existence which is to come to each one of us after death, it is yet a word deserving to be honoured by us, and borne in mind for our instruction and our warning.

Thus then from the Jews came the clear anticipation of the Kingdom of God and eternal life. It came to them by virtue of their valour, their fidelity ; it was the reward which they



had earned and received from God. Their valour is symbolised in the picturesque miracles of the book of Daniel ; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the burning furnace, Daniel in the den of lions, are representatives, not literally true but in many respects true in the spirit, of a heroism and a fidelity abundantly exemplified in the Maccabean wars.

We may perhaps regret that the writer of the book of Daniel had no specific advice to offer to his fellow-countrymen, as to their duty in the hour of victory. Their victory over the Syrian king was great ; but what were to be their principles of action afterwards ?

Here, indeed, we come to the weak side of the Jewish nation, in the period after the Maccabean wars. They stood expectant ; they had no definite principle of action, to guide them towards the future. Their notion of duty lay in obedience to the law ; they did not listen to the springs of natural action within their own spirit. Hence formalism grew upon them ; and in formalism lay no rational ground of hopefulness for the future. John Hyrcanus, successful as he was in a military sense, had no origina-tive power as a statesman. He died at the very close of the second century before Christ. Then slowly, but surely and inevitably, did the splendour of the Maccabean times vanish. While the rulers of the Maccabean family (the Asmoneans, as they were called) fell into disrepute and passed away, while the Idumæan Herod (circumcised, and yet an alien) mounted to the throne of Judæa and astonished the world by his wild passions and his savage ability, the Romans were becoming conspicuous as the supreme masters (in so far as military supremacy constitutes mastery) of the whole world that lay within the familiar knowledge of the Mediterranean nations. No longer was any part of that imperial rule of the texture of brittle pottery ; it was iron through and through. Pompey had entered into the holy of holies in the temple at Jerusalem ; he had harmed it not, it is true ; he had wondered at the absence of any image of the Deity ; but his presence there had been the presence of a conqueror. What were the Jews to think ? It was impos-sible for them to acknowledge the Roman power as divine ; and yet why did God, the true God, delay the manifestation of himself ? Alone, among all the nations beneath the sway of Rome, did the Jews stand haughty and unbending before their conquerors. An inward fire possessed their spirits ; they dared not disbelieve God, or think that his promises to them would

fail ; and yet how was God about to vindicate himself ? That was the pressing question which, while it was unsolved, seemed to crush the life out of their hearts. They searched and they searched, and truly we must pity them ; but to pity themselves they had no leisure. They were as men in a dark cave, imprisoned away from the light of heaven, and yet knowing that that light was not far away : but were they to wait in patience till it should stand self-revealed ? or were they to bestir themselves in action, trusting to find it ? The hopes of the nation had long shaped themselves into the forecast of a Messiah, an anointed Divine King who should be ; but of the character of that Messiah they could foresee but little.

The literature of the Jewish people, after the Maccabean wars, bears witness to the spirit that I have just been describing ; a spirit in which intense devotion to tradition was combined with an idealistic view of the future, and especially of the destiny and office of Israel in the years to come. The literature to which I am referring is in the main what is called apocalyptic, and it bears the style and impress of the book of Daniel, of which I have already given an account ; but there are some remarkable exceptions to this statement to which I must begin by referring more particularly.

These exceptions are the books of the Maccabees. The first book of the Maccabees is characterised by the real historical temper beyond any other literary production of the ancient Israelites. The author of it seems to have felt that the exploits which he was recording were sufficiently memorable to attract and retain the attention of his reader without adventitious ornament and without any undue boasting ; and we cannot be too grateful to him for his modesty and his reserve. The second book of the Maccabees has something of the same characteristics as the first book, though not quite free from marvels ; the famous though dreadful story, in the sixth and seventh chapters, of the martyrdoms of the Jews, excites our respect and sympathy. The third and fourth books are of unequal value to the other two, but yet have history as their basis.

The books of the Maccabees stand alone, however, and the main bulk of this literature is, as I have said, apocalyptic. The works which compose it will be found lucidly translated and explained in the second of the two learned and ample volumes entitled *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, edited by Dr Charles. Now by apocalyptic literature is to be



understood literature which is prophetic indeed, but not exhortative in that plain direct manner in which Hosea and Isaiah are exhortative; prophetic of the distant future in a special way. It is true that in the book of the Revelation in the New Testament, in the second and third chapters, there is some exhortation; and exhortation is not entirely absent, though veiled, in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, a Jewish work written towards the close of the second century before Christ; but on the whole consolation and exaltation of the spirit, rather than reproof or even instruction, is the object of both these works. Much more is this the case with the book of Enoch, the most singular and elaborate, though far from the worthiest, of all Jewish books written between the time of the Maccabean wars and the Christian era.

I have spoken of the book of the Revelation in the New Testament as parallel to the Jewish apocalyptic works written before the Christian era; but the decisive difference between it and them must also be mentioned. Whoever was the author of the book of the Revelation (a question on which it would be premature for me to enter in this place), he was at all events a writer who did not fear to speak in his own person, and who claimed to be himself inspired. Now it is the invariable practice of the Jewish apocalyptic writers to attribute their writings to some ancient patriarch: Enoch, or the sons of Jacob, for instance; I need not go through all the names. It will be evident what a want of directness must pervade a literature composed after this pattern. A Jew of the first century before Christ, who supposed himself to be reading the words of the patriarch Issachar, might find many sound moral maxims expressed therein; but he would seldom find anything precisely suited to the circumstances in which he himself stood, so many centuries later. Now it is true, as Dr Charles has done well to point out, that the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs do inculcate a very pure personal morality, and in some degree anticipate very distinctive features of New Testament morality. But this is not the same thing as saying that the writer, or writers, of this work penetrated to the real needs of their own generation, or of the nation to which they belonged. What really stood in the way of the Jews becoming the instructors and honoured masters of all the nations of the world, which in many respects they deserved to be, was that rigid ceremonial with which they were bound, which they could not help conserving absolutely even where the counsels of love

and fellow feeling would have impelled them to break it. This was the weakness of Judaism at the time of which I am writing; and to break through their bondage, something much stronger was needed than any teacher of Israel provided during the two centuries before the Christian era. This is perhaps enough to say concerning the merits and the defects of Jewish literature during this period.

The sects into which the Jewish people were at this time divided are famous and notable; a very brief characterisation of them is all that can be attempted here. The same problem was before all; but they dealt with it in very different ways. The Sadducees, distinguished rather by station and power than by number, held the great official positions; cool-headed, not fanatical, but severe as judges; holding by the Pentateuch as clear definite law, with the sanction of Mosaic authorship; but with much less esteem for the prophetic writings, and rejecting the idea of a future life; not courteous in their manners (so Josephus tells us) but not politically restless. At the other extreme of disposition and conduct were the Essenes, ascetics in principle, associating hardly at all in public affairs; discouraging marriage, though not wholly forbidding it; practising the ceremonial law with care; intent upon love to God and love to man; believers in immortality. From the gentle ardour of the Essenes a rebellious spirit was totally alien; in them lay no seed of danger. Nor would the Sadducees, taken in themselves, have been a provocative element; they had too little fervour. But the enthusiastic hopes of the Jews had their chief abode in the third party, the Pharisees. Like the Essenes, the Pharisees were fervent; like the Essenes, they practised a strict ceremonial; like the Essenes, they believed in immortal life and in the resurrection of the dead. But unlike the Essenes, they mingled with the world; unlike the Essenes, they displayed their feelings publicly; and their feelings contained such a sense of superiority to heathen races, their principles were so imbued with that separatism on which Ezra had insisted (and which the name Pharisee implies), that other nations could hardly look upon them with equanimity. Flatterers they were not; they had withstood the powerful John Hyrcanus to his face; and if their obedience to the ceremonial law was servile, they were teachers also of the moral law, and the close brotherhood of Jews to each other was in great part due to their teaching. That they were wise counsellors of their own nation cannot be affirmed. but



the extreme difficulty of the problem before them must be remembered. Respecting the fourth party among the Jews, the Zealots, it need only be said that they were the extreme wing of the Pharisees, that the title of fanatics was justly applicable to them.

Upon the Jewish nation, so lofty in their thoughts, and yet so perplexed and erring, now burst like a thunderclap the cry of John the Baptist, "Repent ye ; for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand." How should that manifestation take place ? That was the question of questions.

END OF VOLUME I











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